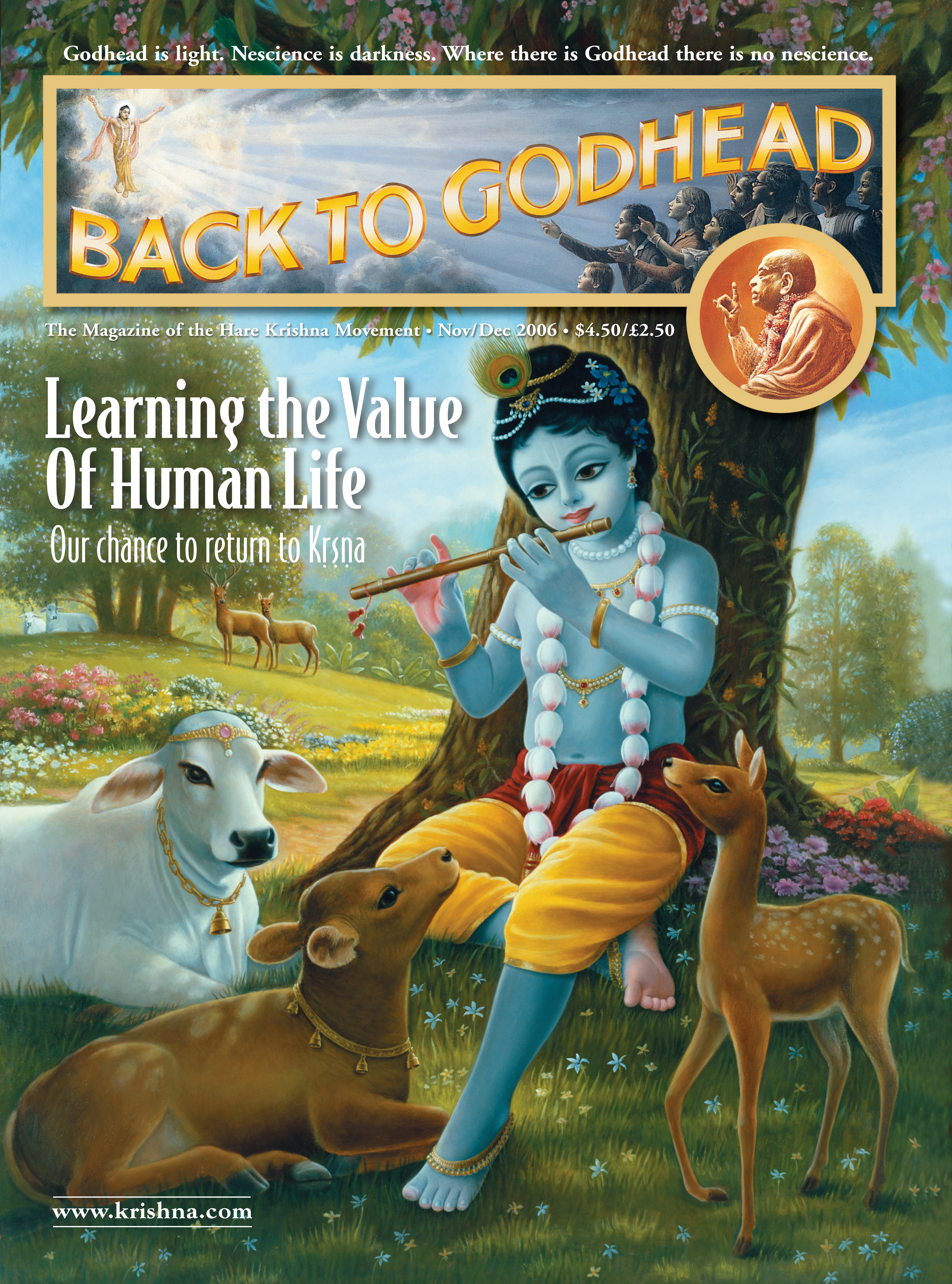
Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • Nov/Dec 2006 • $4.50/£2.50



Learning the Value Of Human Life

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Founded 1944 • Vol. 40, No. 6 • November / December 2006

GOD
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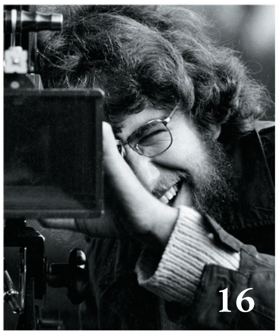

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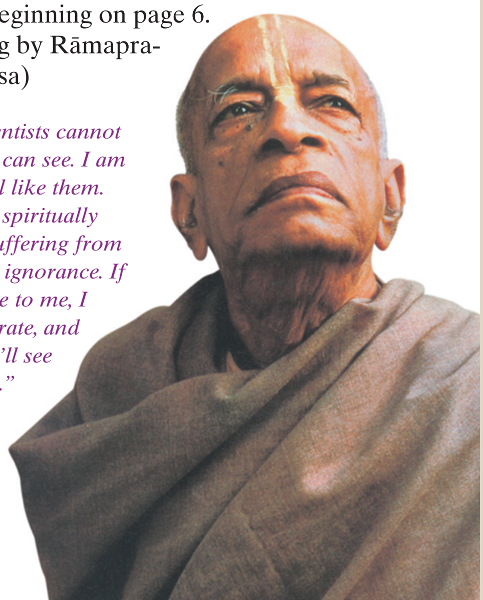
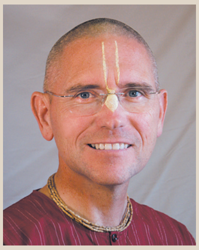
COVER Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, doesn't have to work, because His agents take care of everything while He simply enjoys with His devotees, who can assume any form to please Him. The goal of human life should be join Kṛṣṇa in His eternal abode. Please see the article beginning on page 6. (Painting by Rāmaprasāda Dāsa)



"The scientists cannot see, but I can see. I am not a fool like them. They are spiritually blind—suffering from cataracts, ignorance. If they come to me, I shall operate, and then they'll see God also."
—p. 53

WELCOME



ŚRĪLA Prabhupāda's lecture leading off this issue deals with a theme he stressed over and over again: the need to take our human life seriously. We are all spiritual beings, now caught up in matter. Only human life affords us the chance to awaken our innate love for Kṛṣṇa and leave this world of suffering to return to Him in His eternal home.

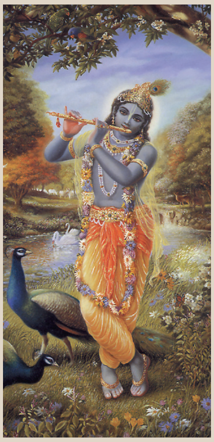
Covered by the material energy, we have forgotten our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, who is our source and our eternal friend. We can awaken our love for Him through the practice of *bhakti-yoga.* In "The Tastiest Spice Is Love," Arcana Siddhī Devī Dāsī shows how easy it can be to please Kṛṣṇa and receive reciprocation from Him. *Bhakti-yoga* begins with learning about Kṛṣṇa, and in "Looking into the Structure of the *Bhagavad-gītā,*" Īśvara Kṛṣṇa Dāsa helps us get a perspective on Kṛṣṇa's teachings.

One aspect of Kṛṣṇa that may be problematic for newcomers is His animal incarnations. In "Lord Kūrma and the Battle for Ambrosia," Aja Govinda Dāsa gives us some insight into the Lord's pastime of accepting the form of a tortoise. Dvija-maṇi Dāsa tells us about a book that can inspire love for Kṛṣṇa while teaching Sanskrit grammar.

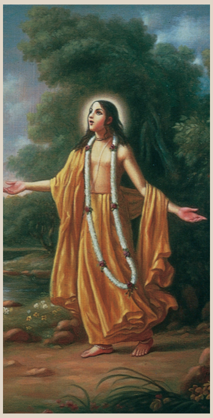
Hare Kṛṣṇa.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.



Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and source of all material and spiritual worlds



Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Kṛṣṇa's most recent incarnation, taught Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

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EDITOR Nāgarāja Dāsa • **ASSOCIATE EDITORS** Drutakarmā Dāsa, Kālakaṇṭha Dāsa, Satyarāja Dāsa, Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī, Viśākhā Devī Dāsī • **EDITORIAL ADVISOR** Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami • **EDITORIAL ASSISTANT** Madhava Smullen • **DESIGN / LAYOUT** Yamarāja Dāsa • **PROOFREADERS** Keśīhanta Dāsa, Mahāmāyā Devī Dāsī • **ARCHIVES** Rañjita Dāsa • **CUSTOMER SERVICE** Ijya Dāsa, Lokasākṣinī Devī Dāsī • **CIRCULATION** Ganga Sutton, Manjari Gautier, Saranagati McGlinn • **ACCOUNTS** Puṇya Kīrti Dāsa • **WEBSITE** Balarama Bosch, Jivana Wilhoit, Manu Kaseder, Prāṇadā Devī Dāsī

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Letters

Still Learning After Thirty Years

The July/August issue of BTG was spectacular! Especially the article entitled "Gurvaṣṭaka Prayers," by Rādhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa. This article has taken me to another level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For over thirty years I've been singing these prayers but mispronouncing the words and not understanding the deeper meanings. Thank you for opening my eyes with the torchlight of knowledge.

Rādhākānta Dāsa
Nashville, Tennessee

How Kṛṣṇa Protects

Regarding the attack in Manipur on Janmāṣṭamī [go to www.iskcon.com for the story], aren't devotees of Kṛṣṇa supposed to be protected from evil forces? If even after devoting myself to Kṛṣṇa, my protection from evil and demonic forces is not guaranteed, then why worship Him?

If you assert something, please provide references from the Vedic scriptures.

Ashish B. Rane
Via the Internet

Our reply: Here are some considerations that should give you some insight:

Even great philosophers have difficulty understanding the plan of the Lord, as Bhīṃṣa mentioned to Yudhiṣṭhira (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.16).

Kṛṣṇa promises that His devotee will not be vanquished (*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.31). His promise does not mean that the material body of His devotee will always be protected from death, but that the devotee's soul will not be degraded and will ultimately come to Him for eternal life in the spiritual world (Bg. 4.9, 18.55, 18.58).

In the scripture there are cases where Kṛṣṇa protects His devotees' bodies from destruction. Lord Nṛsiṁha protected Prahlāda Mahārāja when agents of his father tried to kill him in at least five ways. Haridāsa Ṭhākura was also protected from being killed by the blows of the agents of a Moslem king in twenty-two marketplaces and even from suffering the pain of the blows. So for perfectly pure devotees, Kṛṣṇa even protects their bodies in some cases. Were the devotees killed in Manipur as elevated as Prahlāda Mahārāja and Haridāsa Ṭhakura? Without offending them, I think it is safe to say that that is unlikely.

What is the destination of persons who die on Janmaṣṭami while celebrating Kṛṣṇa's birth by watching a performance of His *rāsa-līlā* dance? Kṛṣṇa says that one who leaves his body remembering Kṛṣṇa will attain Kṛṣṇa (Bg. 8.5). Certainly such people would attain the spiritual world, which may not have happened if they died under other circumstances. Perhaps the people just had a little karma to be lived through before Kṛṣṇa took them back.

If one becomes devoted to Lord Kṛṣṇa, one gradually becomes free from all karma and attains the spiritual kingdom. Persons who delight in killing innocent persons do not make it there. Who else can promise you such shelter?

Events like this also teach us that the material world is a miserable place, as Kṛṣṇa repeatedly mentions (Bg. 8.15, 9.33), and motivate us to try to get out of it.

Increase Hare Kṛṣṇa Visibility

I greatly enjoy the personal stories about how devotees come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Ben Granofsky's "My Mom's Long-Neglected Book" (September/October) was no exception. It saddened me, however, that when he asked his mom if people who practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness still exist, she said no—they were a cult that came and went along with many other religious fads of the era.

We must turn that perception around! With a desire to help fulfill Lord Caitanya's prophesy that the holy names will be heard in every town and village, I occasionally venture out to chant (alone) in small towns in my vicinity. I am grateful for this service. It puts me on the frontline as a preacher. Unintentional hearing of the holy names is devotional service, and it entitles the hearer to render service to Kṛṣṇa in the future. If a devotee strictly adheres to the principles of Vaiṣṇava behavior, his bodily luster will be attractive and his singing and chanting will be effective. If all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas routinely performing public chanting, we can quickly and easily create an upsurge in the visibility and viability of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

Rūpacandra Devī Dāsī
Bonners Ferry, Idaho

Torn Between the Gods

I really want to adopt Kṛṣṇa consciousness in my life. However, since childhood I have been a devotee of Lord Śiva and I feel I'm separated between the gods. One is a Supreme Personality of Godhead and the other is someone whom I treat as my father. Please help me out.

Mayur
Via the Internet

Our reply: Since you are a devotee of Lord Śiva, you can learn from his devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Rāma, and Lord Viṣṇu. Lord Śiva is glorified as the greatest Vaiṣṇava because he is always meditating on Lord Viṣṇu in His different forms. You can follow in his footsteps and also always think of Lord Viṣṇu. You can also read the many great prayers that Lord Śiva offers to the Supreme Lord in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* Canto 4, Chapter 24, entitled "Chanting the Song Sung by Lord Śiva." You can consider how pleased Lord Śiva will be if you develop devotion for the Supreme Lord. In fact, Lord Śiva is the origin of a *sampradāya,* or spiritual lineage, dedicated to promoting *bhakti* to Viṣṇu, called the Rudra or Viṣṇusvāmī *sampradāya.*

Who's in Control?

Who is controller of my life, activities, moods, senses, mind, bad habits, etc.? What is the position of these items?

Shaily
Via the Internet

Our reply: According to *Bhagavad-gītā* there is one supreme controller, and that is the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. Depending on our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, however, we are controlled in different ways. If we ignore our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we are controlled impersonally by the law of karma, and we suffer or enjoy as we deserve according to our past deeds. For example, if we cause someone mental agony, then we'll have to suffer mental agony. If, however, we turn toward the service of Kṛṣṇa, we become free from these temporary enjoyments and sufferings and get a taste of eternal transcendental happiness in relationship with the Lord.

Thus *Bhagavad-gītā* recommends the path of surrender to Kṛṣṇa as the best course of action. Such surrender makes the activities of our mind and bodies favorable for spiritual elevation. Otherwise we wander aimlessly in search of sensual pleasure, which can never satisfy the soul.

Therefore, we should always cultivate our desire to pursue our relationship with the Supreme Lord. The chanting of the name of God is the best way to do this.

(*please turn to page 37*)

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FOUNDER'S LECTURE

Mauritius—October 2, 1975

LEARNING THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

The soul in material consciousness wastes
human life in the pursuit of animal pleasures.

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

śrī-prahrāda uvāca
matir na kṛṣṇe parataḥ svato vā
mitho 'bhipadyeta gṛha-vratānām
adānta-gobhir viśatāṁ tamisraṁ
punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇānām

"Prahlāda Mahārāja replied: Because of their uncontrolled senses, persons too addicted to materialistic life make progress toward hellish conditions and repeatedly chew that which has already been chewed. Their inclinations toward Kṛṣṇa are never aroused, either by the instructions of others, by their own efforts, or by a combination of both.
—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.30

WE ARE TRYING to spread this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. It is a very difficult task because people are so much addicted to material enjoyment that they do not like this movement, although reviving one's Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the objective, aim, and ultimate goal of human life.

We have forgotten Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is God. That is the verdict of the Vedic literature. At the present moment, especially in this age, Kali-yuga, people are not interested in God consciousness. Why? That is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.15):

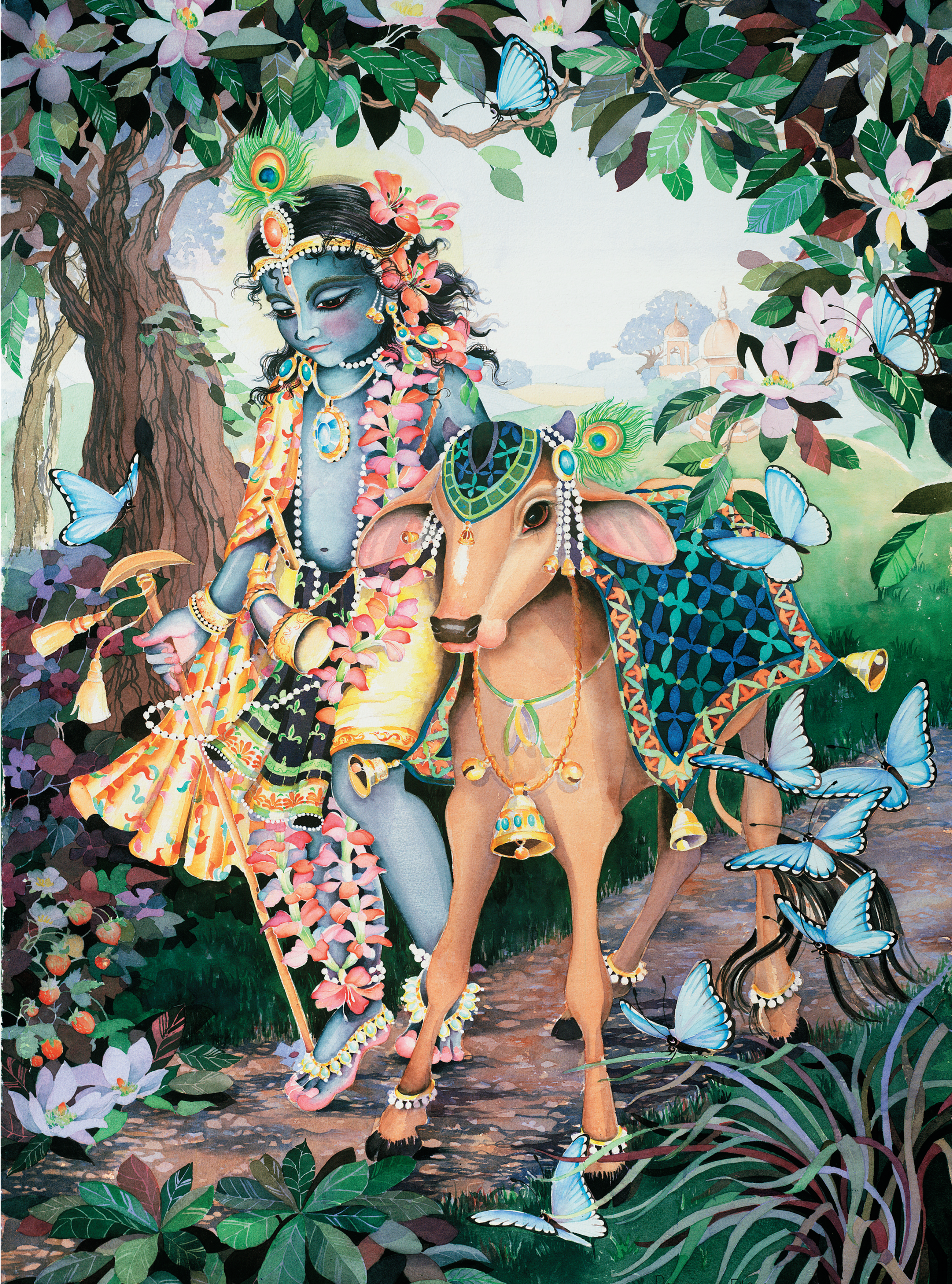
na māṁ duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ
prapadyante narādhamāḥ
māyayāpahṛta-jñānā
āsuraṁ-bhāvam āśritāḥ

"Those miscreants who are grossly foolish, who are lowest among mankind, whose knowledge is stolen by illusion, and who partake of the atheistic nature of demons do not surrender unto Me." Kṛṣṇa says, "These classes of men don't surrender unto Me." First is the *duṣkṛtina. Duṣkṛtina* means persons always engaged in sinful activities. *Kṛti* means very meritorious, very intelligent. But *duṣkṛti* refers to people whose merit is being used for sinful activities.

"Sinful activities" means sense gratification. People are very much addicted to sense gratification, and the symptoms of this are very prominent in

Right: Human life provides us the opportunity to reestablish our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the all-attractive Soul of all souls.

Painting by Annapūrṇā Devī Dāsī



this age. Everyone is working very hard simply for sense gratification. And as soon as you take this life to be for sense gratification, you are sure to commit sinful activities. For example, throughout the world there are so many distilleries manufacturing liquor. Especially in the Western countries you will find so many advertisements—liquor advertisement, whiskey advertisement, cigarette advertisement.

And what to speak of slaughterhouses. There are many, many hundreds and thousands of slaughterhouses. Innocent animals are being killed unnecessarily all over the world. People can live with food grains. That is allowed for all living entities. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.14) it is said, *annād bhavanti bhūtāni:* "Simply by growing food grains, both animals and man can live very happily." And you can grow food grains very easily. I have seen in the Western countries that they are growing food grains for the animals. Animals eat the food grains, and man eats the animals. What is the statistic about the number of people who could be fed with the grains being fed to animals?

Bhagavad-gītā has every instruction for happy life and advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to make our life perfect.

Disciple: For one cow to eat requires so many acres, and then that cow is slaughtered and it feeds only a few men, whereas that same acreage could feed hundreds of men with grains.

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Disciple: Seventeen times.

Prabhupāda: So these things are to be noted, how they are engaged in sinful activities. And the solution is given in the *Bhagavad-gītā:* "Produce food grain." *Annād bhavanti bhūtāni.*

I see that here in Mauritius you have got enough land to produce food grains. But I understand that instead of growing food grains, you are growing sugar cane for exporting. Why? And you depend on imports of food grains—rice, wheat, dahl. Why? First of all grow your own eatables. And if there is time and if your population has got sufficient food grains, then you can try to grow other fruits and vegetables for exporting.

The first necessity is that you should be self-sufficient. That is God's arrangement. Everywhere there is sufficient land to produce food grains, not only in your country. I have traveled all over the world—Africa, Australia, America. There is so much land vacant that if we produce food grains, then we can feed ten times the present population. There is no question of scarcity.

The whole creation is so made by Kṛṣṇa that everything is complete. If we don't produce food grain and unnecessarily put people into scarcity, that is sinful.

The Same Sense Gratification Everywhere

Bhagavad-gītā has every instruction for happy life and advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to make our life perfect. Unfortunately, we do not know what is the perfect life. Therefore it is said here, *punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇānām:* "again and again chewing the chewed." Perfection means stopping this business of chewing the chewed. We have got this human form of life. Now, by our pious activities we may be elevated to the higher planetary system, Svargaloka, the heavenly planet. But what shall we gain there? The same sense gratification in a higher standard, that's all. Sense gratification is there in the society of the cats and dogs, and it is there in one country and another country, though the arrangement may be a little different. But the pleasure of sense gratification is the same, whether you enjoy it as a dog, as a human being, or as a demigod. The pleasure of sense gratification is not different. It is the same.

In the material world we are changing from one body to another and enjoying sense gratification. That is called *punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇānām,* chewing the chewed. I have tasted it in this life and that life, and again I am trying to taste it some more.

When we are disgusted with this business, that is called knowledge. That knowledge, along with renunciation or detachment, can be achieved only by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is clearly stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.9):

janma karma ca me divyam
evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna

If we simply study Kṛṣṇa in truth, then the result will be that after giving up this present body, we will not have to accept another material body. To accept another material body is called *punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇānām.* Whether I get this human form of body, or the body of a dog, or the body of a demigod, the business is the same: *āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunaṁ ca*—eating, sleeping, sex life, and defense.

Don't think that the heavenly planets are very safe. We have got information from the *Bhāgavatam* that Lord Indra is always perplexed because demons disturb him. The lifespan on the heavenly planets is ten thousand of their years, and one day there is equal to our six months. Still, fighting with the demons causes disturbances there.

Our life is being spoiled by sense gratification and changing bodies, and that can be stopped only by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prahlāda Mahārāja is saying, "Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be achieved by *gṛha-vratānām.*" *Gṛha-vratānām* means those who are interested only in the happiness of family life or sense gratification. For them, achieving Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very difficult.

In today's verse, a talk is taking place between a father and his son. The son is Prahlāda. He is a devotee. And the father, Hiraṇyakaśipu, is a materialistic person. He is interested in money and women. That is the difference between a devotee and a nondevotee.

The father was challenging his son: "Where have you gotten this Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

The son replied flatly: "My dear father, Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be achieved by speculation or by hearing from others."

Why? *Gṛha-vratānām.* If one is addicted to the material way of life, he cannot understand, or cannot be convinced about, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.44), it is said:

> *bhogaiśvarya-prasaktānāṁ*
> *tayāpahṛta-cetasāṁ*
> *vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ*
> *samādhau na vidhīyate*

Those who are too attached to the materialistic way of life cannot attain Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "The materialistic way of life" means sense gratification. What is the difference between spiritual life and material life? These boys from Europe and America have adopted spiritual life. That means they have stopped the process of sense gratification—no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no gambling, no intoxication. These constitute the materialistic way of life. If we stick to that way of life, it will be very, very difficult to understand this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Addicted to Unnecessary Things

Why? *Adānta-gobhiḥ. Adānta* means uncontrolled. Our senses are uncontrolled. This morning, while I was walking on the beach, we found so many things—an empty bottle of Coca-cola, cigarette butts, and so many other things. What is the necessity of this Coca-cola? You don't find all these things in our Society. We don't drink Coca-cola. We don't drink Pepsi-cola. We don't smoke. We avoid so many things that are selling in the market in huge quantity because of advertisements, victimizing the poor customer. But they are unnecessary things. There is no need of them. But because the senses cannot be controlled, people are making business by selling unnecessary things.

We have to control the senses. If we really want spiritual life, if we really want to be free from the material clutches, then we have to learn how to control the senses. That is wanted. That is the purpose of human life. Human life is not meant for imitating the life of cats and dogs and hogs. That is not human life.

This morning, a press representative came to take some information. Our first piece of information is that we are trying to bring people from the standard of cats' and dogs' life to the standard of human beings. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Cats' and dogs' life means *adānta-gobhiḥ*—uncontrolled senses. That is cats' and dogs' life. A female dog is surrounded by a dozen male dogs. Why? *Adānta-gobhiḥ:* they cannot control their senses. They are having sex on the street because they cannot control their senses. Human life means to control the senses. If you remain like cats and dogs, without controlling the senses, then what is the difference between the dog and you?

Presently, the so-called civilization allows people to enjoy the senses as far as possible. That is the so-called advancement of civilization. We can be very happy by eating the food grains which we must produce either for ourselves or for the animals. Without producing food grain you cannot even eat meat. But because we have uncontrolled senses, instead of eating the grains, we are eating the animals. That is called *adānta-gobhiḥ.*

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millenniums ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch, jh,** and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh.** So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

We do not consider, "The life I am killing for my subsistence is eating grain, and I can also eat grain. So why shall I commit this sin by killing another living being?"

You are not allowed to kill even an ant. In the state, suppose a man is useless; he is not doing anything. But you cannot kill him. If you do, the state will take steps and you will be hanged.

You cannot say, "That man was useless; he had no utility for society. Therefore I have killed him."

No, you cannot kill him. The prohibition against killing a human being is a man-made law. But under God-made laws, if you kill any living being you receive the same punishment. But we do not know this, on account of our uncontrolled senses. We do not know that by killing innocent animals we are going to the darkest region of hellish life.

Our nature is to be happy, pleased, joyful. But sinful activities are not the way to become happy and joyful.

Actually that is happening now—the child is in the womb of the mother; it is a hellish condition, floating in stool, urine. And the life of the child is not safe because in the modern advanced civilization the child is being killed even by the mother. This is going on.

We do not know the subtle laws of nature, subtle laws of God, how things are going on. And without knowing these facts, our human life is spoiled.

Teaching the Value of Life

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to convince and educate people about the value of life. We have not manufactured all this. It is received from the *Vedas,* books of knowledge. *Veda* means "knowledge." *Jñāna* also means knowledge. Human life is meant for taking knowledge.

We are now implicated in so much sinful life, and we will have to reap the result. We will have to suffer for it. We are not going to die. The atheist thinks, "When this body is finished, everything is finished." That is not the fact. We are simply changing the dress, this body. But as soul, I am eternal, you are eternal, and on account of our uncontrolled senses, unbridled senses, we are changing different types of body. Suppose that as human being I am enjoying life very nicely but in my next life I become a street dog. We can see how miserable that life is. Even if I become a very powerful, strong animal like a tiger or a lion, it is still a miserable life. As long as we are in the material world, changing different bodies, it is miserable. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (5.5.4), says:

nūnaṁ pramattaḥ kurute vikarma
yad indriya-prītaya āpṛṇoti
na sādhu manye yata ātmano 'yam
asann api kleśada āsa dehaḥ

People have become mad, *pramattaḥ,* and they are performing all kinds of sinful activities. And why are they doing so? *Yad indriya-prītaya āpṛṇoti:* "Simply for sense gratification." There is no higher aim, only sense gratification. The *Bhāgavatam* therefore says, *na sādhu . . . ayam:* "This is not good." Why? Because on account of our sinful activities we have already got this painful, miserable, conditioned life, this body, and if we still go on like that, then again we shall get such a body and suffering. This is reasonable. This is *jñāna.*

Every one of us is trying to be happy without any suffering. That is the aim of life. *Ānandamayo 'bhyāsāt* (*Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.12). We are living beings, part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. Our nature is to be happy, pleased, joyful. But sinful activities are not the way to become happy and joyful. The way is different. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Everyone should be very serious to accept the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness themselves and teach others—in the state, family, community. We should not be envious of our dependents. We should be liberal. Give them the proper chance to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that they make their life happy and attain the stage of eternity.

We are eternal; we are simply changing bodies. This is a great science. But unfortunately it is not being taught in the school, college, and university. People are simply in darkness. If we keep people in darkness and advertise that we are advancing, that is a type of cheating.

People should understand the value of life, the science of life. We are changing bodies. There are 8,400,000 forms of life. The trees are standing in our compound. They cannot move an inch. Is that a very good life? If I am asked to stand in one place for five minutes, it becomes troublesome. Some trees are standing for five thousand years. Just see the punishment.

There are so many forms of life. But there is no science to understand why there are varieties of life, why this tree is standing in front of me in a miserable condition and I am sitting in this room very comfortably. The tree is a life, and I am a life. Who is arranging for these different statuses of life? These things are to be understood. And everything is there, clear, in the *Bhagavad-gītā.* If you take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and study *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* then your life is successful. Every father, every state, every guardian, every guru, every relative should educate his dependents in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to give them the chance to be liberated from this bondage of the miserable condition of material life.

Thank you very much.

Glossary

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Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

Battle of Kurukshetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to his friend and disciple Arjuna.

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").

Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in his original transcendental form (see "Godhead").

Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

Māyāvādī—one who regards the A ultimately impersonal.

Modes of nature—the three qualities (and ignorance) that hold sway over all act material world.

Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prasādam—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to him with devotion (literally "mercy").

Purāṇas—Vedic histories.

Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

Rathayātrā—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").

Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

Śrī—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas,* which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and his devotees.

Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

Upaniṣads—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas.*

Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord himself at the beginning of creation.

Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

THE TASTIEST SPICE IS LOVE

Lord Kṛṣṇa is complete within Himself and doesn't need anything from us, but He wants our love.

by Arcana Siddhī Devī Dāsī

IT WAS MY birthday, and my husband offered to cook dinner. He asked me what I would like him to make, and without much deliberation I replied, "Pizza."

My husband is a good cook, but he had never made pizza. I gave him the recipe I use from a cookbook by Kūrma Dāsa. He meticulously cut up strips of eggplant and pan-fried them along with diced red peppers. Wanting the pizza to be especially good, he ground up fresh wheat berries to make flour for the dough. He grated cheese, sliced black olives, and made a tomato sauce. After assembling all the ingredients, he baked the pizza in the oven and then offered it, along with a salad my son made, to our deities.

When we sat down for our *prasādam* meal, the pizza looked as enticing as the picture in the cookbook. But as I took the first bite, I commented on how sweet the crust tasted. My husband said he used exactly what the recipe called for: ½ cup of sugar. I couldn't believe the dough called for a ½ cup of sugar, so I opened up the cookbook and found the recipe, which called for ½ teaspoon of sugar.

Although my husband had been distracted by numbers I had written in the recipe to increase the proportions, he took full responsibility for his blunder and was feeling a little dejected. I was somewhat attached to the idea of eating a tasty pizza, but I knew how much time and effort went into his offering, and that overshadowed the result. I laughed and told him it didn't matter how it tasted, since I knew he had done it out of love and that was

Yamarāja Dāsa

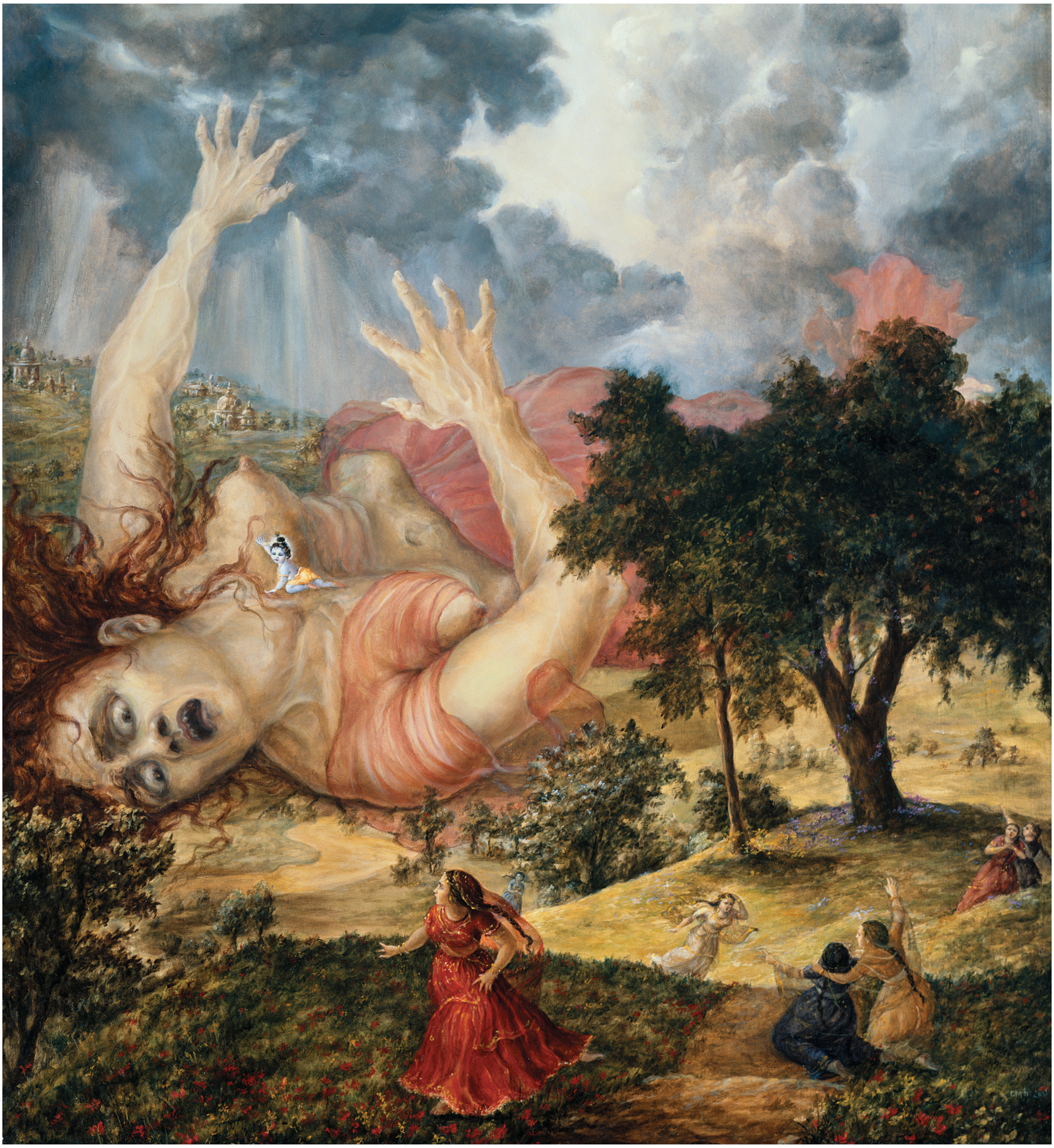
CLOCK
TIMER
11:17
Kenmore
CLEAN SEAS
Fine Sea Salt
Tone's

the most important thing. His mood then brightened as he reflected on how Kṛṣṇa accepts our love.

Kṛṣṇa Eats Banana Peels

He remembered the story of Kṛṣṇa's going to the house of Vidura for lunch. Duryodhana had also invited Kṛṣṇa to dine with him. But although Duryodhana was wealthy and would have provided the finest ingredients and delectable dishes, he was hostile to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. So Kṛṣṇa refused Duryodhana's invitation and went instead to house of His devotee Vidura.

When Kṛṣṇa arrived there, Vidura wanted to offer Him bananas, but in his ecstasy, he threw the bananas away and offered Him the peels. Still, because the peels were offered with so much love,



Painting by Dṛthi-Devī Dāsī

Even though the witch Pūtanā tried to kill Kṛṣṇa by suckling Him with her poison-coated breasts, He reciprocated by awarding her the position of His nurse in the spiritual world.

the Lord accepted and ate them.

The Lord says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that if we offer Him with love even simple things like a leaf, a flower, or a little water, He will accept them. Of course, we should offer the best things we can within our means, but the most important ingredient is our love. Kṛṣṇa is complete within Himself and doesn't need anything from us, but He wants our love.

Since everything in the material world reflects the spiritual reality, we can get some glimmer of understanding of spiritual truth from experiences on this plane of existence. A father feels touched if his small son uses his allowance to buy him an insignificant gift. The boy could have bought candy or a toy for himself, but instead he feels love for his father and wants to express it by buying a gift and offering it to him.

Recently a young devotee I know was at work in a grocery store when she found a large wad of money on the floor. Conscientiously and ethically, she tried to find the owner. She approached her co-workers and customers in the store, but no one claimed the money. While different thoughts went through her head as to how to spend the money, she became convinced that she should give it to Kṛṣṇa. On New Year's Day she sponsored the Sunday feast at our temple with money she had found. There is no doubt that Kṛṣṇa recognizes her sacrifice and she will derive eternal benefit.

When we use money supplied by the Lord and buy things to offer to Him, He becomes pleased. He reciprocates with every act of devotion we render, even if there is some mixed motive in our heart. He extracts the loving sentiment, no matter how small, and discards the rest.

Pūtanā's Amazing Reward

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* relates the story of Pūtanā, a demoniac woman who came to kill Kṛṣṇa when He was an infant. To carry out her heinous plan, she disguised herself as a beautiful woman. She smeared poison on her breast with the intention of nursing the child and finishing His life. But her evil intentions were thwarted when baby Kṛṣṇa accepted her breast milk and sucked out her life as well. Despite Pūtanā's evil intentions, Kṛṣṇa awarded her liberation as a devotee with a motherly relationship with Him in the spiritual world.

Kṛṣṇa's intimate associate Uddhava once exclaimed, "Who would worship anyone besides Kṛṣṇa, who awarded liberation to a she-demon who came to kill Him?" In other words, there is no one as merciful, compassionate, and forgiving as Kṛṣṇa. If Pūtanā was able to obtain such an exalted position in the spiritual kingdom, then what to speak of souls who approach the Lord with positive intent.

The Vedic scriptures present many paths for obtaining God realization. In *Bhagavad-gītā,* Kṛṣṇa Himself delineates several ways to approach the Absolute Truth. Although He discusses different processes to realize God and oneself, His final recommendation is to give up all other systems of worship except loving service to Him, the Supreme Lord.

In one of the concluding verses of the *Bhagavad-gītā,* Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that all He wants from him is his love. He tells Arjuna how to show his love by several actions: Arjuna should always think of Him, become His devotee, sacrifice for Him, and honor and respect Him. The Lord promises Arjuna that by doing these things with positive loving sentiments, he will obtain His association eternally.

Compared to the other processes described in previous chapters of the *Gītā,* this process is the most direct and user-friendly. Our natural proclivity, free of

(*please turn to page 52*)

BACK TO GODHEAD

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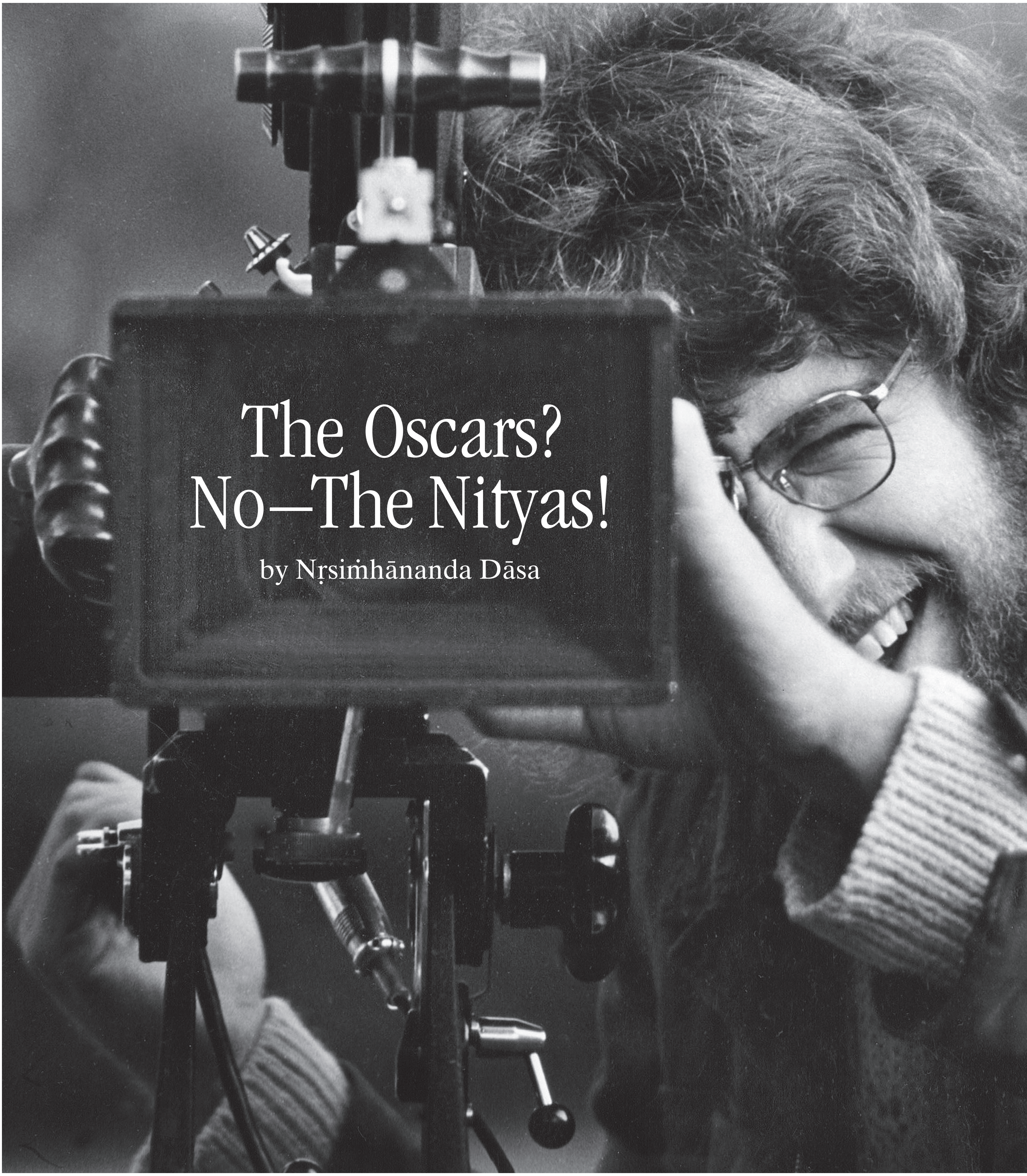
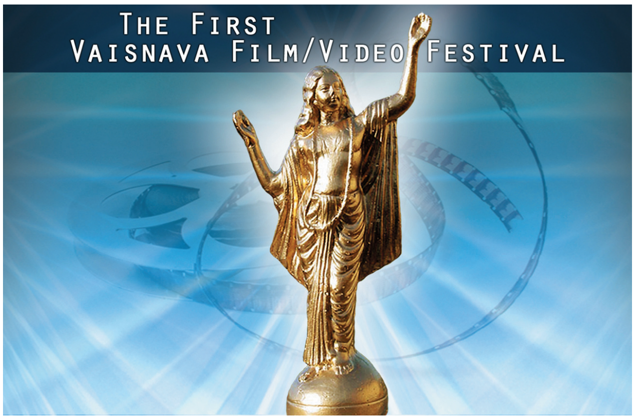


The Oscars? No—The Nityas!

by Nṛsiṁhānanda Dāsa



The author stands behind the camera in the early 1970s (opposite page). At left, the logo for the First Vaiṣṇava Film/ Video Festival in Māyāpur shows the Nityānanda Award.

EXTERIOR. STREET. LONDON, LEISTER SQUARE —DAY

“London, April 1971” [super-imposed]

DAVID [voice-over]

GEORGE Harrison’s “My Sweet Lord,” with its Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra refrain, saturates radio airwaves as the 1970 album “All Things Must Pass” skyrockets to number one worldwide. Rolls Royce declares bankruptcy. Two hundred thousand Vietnam War protestors march determinedly on Washington.

In a world of his own, consciously oblivious of the chaos around him, a young man walks briskly through the fog on his way to the London Film School.

That’s me in the picture: David Shapiro.

From 1969 to 1971, I had been attending classes at the London Film School, adjacent to Leister Square, where Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees chanted nearly every day. Diligently immersed in fulfilling my career dreams, I hadn’t taken any notice of what I thought of as yet another “freak show” of my flower-power generation. This particular afternoon, however, a woman dressed in a sari handed me a magazine with a picture of Kṛṣṇa on the cover. Although in a starving-student state of mind, I inexplicably decided to give her some loose change. Perhaps I was intrigued by the cover painting of a flower-garlanded blue boy playing a flute while His captivating eyes glanced mischievously at me. My eyes riveted to the cover, I continued to hurry across busy streets, .

“Back to Godhead,” the magazine’s title proclaimed.

“What is that supposed to mean?” I wondered.

“Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience,” I read at the top of the page. A thought crossed my mind: “That sounds right.”

A whooshing sound abruptly caught my attention. I looked up from the magazine just in time to narrowly avoid being hit by a double-decker bus. A large advertisement with the catchy phrase “In your head, you know it’s right” scrolled inches from my nose. I don’t know exactly what they were trying to sell, but the message to me was vividly clear: the words on the magazine cover were somehow very important to my life. I wanted to read more, but I had arrived at the school. I had a more immediate errand. Having opted to miss the official graduation ceremony, I was there to collect my diploma.

INTERIOR. LONDON FILM SCHOOL—DAY

The school principal surprised me in the corridor with my certificate. Somehow he had anticipated my arrival.

“Here’s your diploma from the school of illusion,” he said.

Vṛndāvava Līlā-Devī Dāsī

His Holiness Jayapatāka Swami presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to pioneer ISKCON filmmakers Yaduvara Dāsa and Viśākhā Devī Dāsī.

I'd done it! I'd graduated with a master's degree in film. I was twenty-four, and my Hollywood-bound future was awaiting me. I'd already rehearsed my Oscar acceptance speech.

But the principal's words reverberated in my head. *The school of illusion.* What did that *mean*?

A flower child of the 60s, I had been always trying to avoid the real life of politics, war, economics, disease, and death. "Make love, not war" was our mantra. And it was through film that I had learned how to create the illusion of life, one that could help me escape a brutal and unsavory reality. I had spent most Saturday mornings of my childhood at the local movie theater digesting cartoons, Westerns, and, later, love stories. I would laugh, cheer, cry, even cover my eyes during the scary parts. I adored going to the movies, and now I was going to create those illusions myself.

I left the building with a diploma in one hand and, though not conscious of it, a *Back to Godhead* in the other, still mulling over the principal's statement. "Why did he say that?" I was puzzled. Then I noticed the magazine in my hand. I thought perhaps it would give me some clue. I sat down in a small park off Oxford St. and began to peruse it. All the distractions in the park—the kids playing, the lovers kissing, the drunks grumbling at no one in particular—disappeared as the words digested. I had never read anything with such a power of truth. I was stunned at the simplicity and profundity of such concepts as "the real problems of life are birth, death, old age, and disease, not economic development and sense gratification." My material ambitions began to dissolve in the fire of that knowledge. I felt compelled to know more about the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I wanted to go to that spiritual world where "all words are a song, every step a dance." I had found the real Woodstock, where "all you need is love." Three days later, I was living in a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Chicago.

DISSOLVE TO: INT. ADVERTISING AGENCY —DAY

Determined to gain experience as a professional filmmaker, I got a job at a nearby promotion company while living at the temple. I was juggling getting up at 4:00 A.M., attending the morning program at the temple, and working all day during the week. Saturday I went door-to-door distributing books, and Sunday I was involved in preparing the "love feast." Though the devotees told me to just give up my career ambitions and "surrender to Kṛṣṇa," I was defiant. Somehow, I was going to have it all. But one day my boss told me to work on an ad for a liquor company, and I refused. He gave me an ultimatum: produce this commercial or you're fired. That's how Kṛṣṇa arranged for me to be a full-time devotee.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO —DAY

Instead of composing jingles and storyboards, I was chanting eight hours a day on the "busiest street corner in the world," State and Madison. Still, I had film ambitions, and letters from Śrīla Prabhupāda fanned my desire to dovetail my interests: "Just make films about Kṛṣṇa. Then your life will be successful."

INT. BROOKLYN TEMPLE —MORNING

A few months later, I was at Śrīla Prabhupāda's feet in New York City, and I was making an animated film of the *Bhagavad-gītā* with a cinema student interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

INT. NEW DWARKA TEMPLE —MORNING

I followed Śrīla Prabhupāda to Los Angeles, where I was included in an effort to film him giving lectures on every verse in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* We filmed two before Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped the project. He didn't like lecturing to a camera without the presence of a temple full of devotees. But Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated me around that time, so I was happy.

EXT. FILM SET—DAY

Determined to be in the film industry, I got a local job with a newly formed television film production company. Devotees considered me somewhat of a heretic at that time, since devotees didn't work "on the outside." Nevertheless, for five years I paid my dues at that job and went from being a production assistant to producing multi-million-dollar movies for television.

INT. NEW DWARKA TEMPLE —NIGHT, NOVEMBER 1977

That year brought another life-changing event: Śrīla Prabhupāda left this mortal world. At that time, my materialistic ambitions paled in comparison to the profound sadness I felt. I resolved to serve him better, so I began to formulate a plan for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the new technology of videotapes. Thus, the idea of ISKCON Television (ITV) was born. The plan was to produce Kṛṣṇa conscious television programs and distribute them to temples equipped with videotape players all over the world.

INT. ITV OFFICE—DAY

I left my job and worked night and day on formulating the new plan. In 1979, after two years and a lot of lobbying of ISKCON managers, ITV was born as an international ISKCON project. By Kṛṣṇa's grace, Siddhānta Dāsa signed on as an editor and, eventually, co-manager. His dedication and talents were of incalculable value. ITV continues to operate as a nonprofit, charitable organization with a library of over seventy-five titles (www.itvproductions.net).

INT. NEW DWARKA TEMPLE, DEITIES—DAY

But what about that desire for an Oscar?

DISSOLVE TO: EXTERIOR. MAYAPUR DHAMA—NIGHT

"Mayapur, India, 35 years later" [super-imposed]

Twelve hundred onlookers sit under a gigantic marquee before a lighted stage. A high-end video projector illuminates a five-meter-wide screen. I'm introducing this premiere awards ceremony, handing out over five thousand dollars in prize money to winners selected from thirty-seven entries. Films were submitted from countries as diverse as South Africa, U.K., U.S.A., Croatia, India, Czech Republic, Russia, Australia, Canada, and Denmark. Clips from each production play on the huge screen. VIP presenters introduce each category, and then open the envelope as the montage ends. Winners emerge from the audience, their arrival accompanied by music, to accept the shiny golden award and the cash. A glamorous hostess steers them to microphones at either side of the stage. The winners speak of their deep gratitude in being recognized and rewarded. I relish the scene.

Maybe it's not the Oscars. But it is the very first Vaiṣṇava Film/Video Festival ever held. And I'm elated.

Most of the devotees in the audience have never seen chanting parties in Croatia, Food for Life volunteers feeding the victims left homeless in Tsunami-wrecked Sri Lanka, families being reconciled in South Africa, the strength of C.I.S. devotees who had languished in prisons and mental hospitals, the remote Nṛsiṁha temples hidden deep in the jungles of South

Vṛndāvava Līlā-Devī Dāsī

The author (and master of ceremonies) introduces the next winner, while presenter Jagajīvana Dāsa holds the Nityānanda Award.

India, the excitement and challenges of being on the Hare Kṛṣṇa summer Baltic Sea tour, or the exuberance of the Hare Kṛṣṇa youth as they travel with the Festival of India throughout North America. These productions inform, enthuse, and inspire. They unite the Vaiṣṇava family worldwide.

When I started publicizing the promise of the First Vaiṣṇava Film/Video Festival, I expected ten or fifteen entries. When the thirty-seventh arrived just before the deadline, I nearly panicked. I felt the weight of the responsibility of launching a new tradition of awards. I had to recruit judges from my Hollywood contacts to ensure impartiality, select clips for each of the categories, and script the entire show so that it could run seamlessly from one segment to the next. Then there were the tasks of organizing the projector, screen, stage, lighting cues, hosts, presenters, garlands, and script in an Indian rural locale three hours via a precarious and bumpy road from Kolkata. I had to test the plaster mold of Lord Nityānanda and bring it to India so that the statuettes could be cast and painted by skilled artisans.

Nothing is ever as easy as it seems, and this was no exception. But Kṛṣṇa sent an army of devotees to my aid.

The 2006 Nityānanda Awards

Lifetime Achievement Award ($2,000)
Yaduvara Dāsa and Viśākhā Devī Dāsī for
ISKCON Cinema films

Best Editing ($500)
Īśāna Dāsa for *Pilgrimage to Ahobilam*

Best Graphics ($500)
Ezequiel Guerisoli for *Mother Ganga*

Best Sound Editing ($500)
Madhudviṣa Dāsa for *Srila Prabhupada in Australia*

Best Music Score ($500)
Little Gokul Band for *My Hare Krishna Family*

Best Script ($500)
Frank Opperman/Denise Slabbert for
My Hare Krishna Family

Best Director ($500)
Ezequiel Guerisoli for *A Tour Along the Baltic Sea Coast*

Best Cinematography ($500)
Kīrticandra Dāsa for *Mother Ganga*

Best Picture ($1,000)
Denise Slabbert for *My Hare Krishna Family*

Most of these programs are available
at Krishna.com/store

His Holiness Bhakti Puruṣottama Swami is one of the leaders in Māyāpur and organizes the annual ISKCON Māyāpur festival, at which the awards ceremony would take place. He grasped the relevance of recognizing media and gave the green light from the first mention of the idea.

Uddhava Gītā Dāsa, a Brazilian devotee and budding film student, showed up at my house months before the festival to volunteer to help me. Natasha, an enthusiastic Ukranian congregation member, volunteered to come to Māyāpur and be one of the onstage hostesses. I had met her the previous year during a festival in Odessa. Giri-Govardhana Dāsa, a vigorous Polish transplant already in Māyāpur, took charge of getting the "Nityas" cast and finished. For the gala event, Gaṅgā Dāsa (Italy) coordinated all the contacts and supervised the sound and lighting. Advaita Candra Dāsa (New Zealand), Pañcaratna Dāsa (U.S.A.), and Ṣaḍbhuja Dāsa (Australia) all offered their offices, phones, participation, and good will. Most involved was eighteen-year-old Kṛṣṇa Dāsa (Russia), who labored numerous late nights re-authoring the show on his laptop. The awards ceremony was the result of the cooperation of devotees from all over the world.

I may not have gotten the Oscar for which I had dreamed, but now I was producing a transcendental version for the pleasure of the Vaiṣṇavas. Instead of working for profit, adoration, and fame in the material world, producers, directors, and editors were being acknowledged for their labors of loving devotion to guru and Kṛṣṇa.

The first Hare Kṛṣṇa Film/Video Festival was on its way to making history.

Who needs an Oscar? In my mind, that mundane statue paled in comparison to the Nityānanda award.

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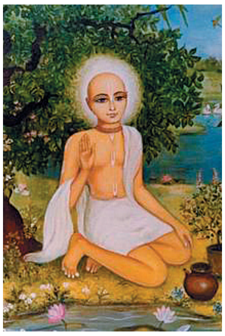


Grammar in

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's sixteenth-century work
Hari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa *reveals*
both his genius and his devotion to the Lord.

by Dvija-maṇi Dāsa

CAN ONE LEARN grammar and learn to love God at the same time? Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, seems to think so. When Kṛṣṇa appeared on earth five hundred years ago in the guise of His own devotee—as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya—he showed the example of how it could be done. His biography *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā* 13.29) describes,

sūtra-vṛtti-pāṅji-ṭīkā kṛṣṇete tātparya
śiṣyera pratīta haya,—prabhāva
āścarya

"When teaching a course in grammar [*vyākaraṇa*] and explaining it with notes, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught His disciples about the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa. All explanations culminated in Kṛṣṇa, and His disciples would understand them very easily. Thus His influence was wonderful." To fulfill this same dual purpose, the great Vaiṣṇava theologian and poet Jīva Gosvāmī, following in his master's footsteps, composed his *Hari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa* ("Grammar Imbued with the Nectar of Hari's [Kṛṣṇa's] Name").

But what has learning grammar to do with loving God? Of course, by learning the Sanskrit language one gains access to a vast abundance of the most wonderful literature glorifying the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Because of Sanskrit's richness, the profundity and sweetness of this literature cannot be matched in other languages. Such literature can melt the heart of a receptive audience. As Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in a letter to a disciple, "No other language of the world is so perfect as Sanskrit." To learn Sanskrit, any grammar textbook will do, but one must wait until one has mastered the language before it can become a tool for cultivating Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Hari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa is different. Through studying this work, one cultivates love for Kṛṣṇa in the very process of learning Sanskrit grammar. How? The secret is in the title. By replacing ordinary grammatical terms with Kṛṣṇa's spiritually potent names, Jīva Gosvāmī engages students in chanting the names of the Lord as they study grammar. To establish the value and efficaciousness of such a "Kṛṣṇa-ized" grammar, Jīva Gosvāmī cites a passage from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.2.14) in the opening of his work:

sāṅketyaṁ pārihāsyaṁ vā
stobhaṁ helanam eva vā
vaikuṇṭha-nāma-grahaṇam
aśeṣāgha-haraṁ viduḥ

"One who chants the holy name of the Lord is immediately freed from the reactions of unlimited sins, even if he chants indirectly [to indicate something else], jokingly, for musical entertainment, or even neglectfully. This is accepted by all the learned scholars of the scriptures."

The fallen Ajāmila was saved at the time of death by calling out his son's name, Nārāyaṇa, a name of Kṛṣṇa. Likewise, by the constant repetition of Kṛṣṇa's names required in a study of Jīva Gosvāmī's grammar, a student's heart can be purified and love for the Lord will gradually grow.

Brilliant Use Of Kṛṣṇa's Names

The real genius of Jīva Gosvāmī is shown in the names he chooses to replace various grammatical terms.

Glorification of God

Above: In Govardhana, near Vṛndāvana, India, the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust has established the Śrīmad-bhāgavata-vidyāpīṭham, an academy for studying Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature. Weather permitting, classes are sometimes held on the roof of the temple building.

The assignation of such names is never arbitrary. Rather, the particular names chosen are theologically significant and relevant to the existing grammatical tradition. How this is so can be seen by taking a pair of examples from the first section of the text, where a number of terms and definitions are set out.

In Sanskrit, vowels are called *svara* and consonants are called *vyañjana.* In Jīva Gosvāmī's work, those terms are replaced with rhyming words: *sarveśvara* (the Lord of all) and *viṣṇujana* (devotee of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa), respectively. The real cleverness of Jīva Gosvāmī, however, is not in the rhyme but in the ability to make a statement with these names that is both grammatically and theologically true. *Viṣṇujana* (Kṛṣṇa's devotee / a consonant) is dependent upon *sarveśvara* (the Lord of all /

Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa (below) is the head teacher at the academy, where students (left) learn Sanskrit from Jīva Gosvāmī's Hari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa.

a vowel). We finite souls cannot act, or even exist, without Kṛṣṇa's grace. Only Kṛṣṇa is independent. Similarly, a word cannot be formed by consonants alone. To articulate the consonants, a vowel sound must be present. But a vowel alone can form its own word, as in the English "I."

The first ten of the fourteen Sanskrit vowels are arranged in five pairs: *a* and *ā, i* and *ī, u* and *ū, ṛ* and *ṝ,* and *l* and *l.* Each pair contains a short and a long version of the same vowel sound. The short members of each pair are called *vāmana;* the long members, *trivikrama.* Both these terms are names for Kṛṣṇa when He appeared as the younger brother of the demigod Indra to save Indra when the demon Bali had gained dominion over the entire universe. Kṛṣṇa appeared as an unthreatening dwarf, thus being given the name Vāmana, which literally means short. He went to Bali and begged to be given in charity just as much land as He could cover with the span of three paces. When Bali conceded, the Lord suddenly expanded into a gigantic form and covered the entire universe with His steps. In this expanded form, He is known as Trivikrama, the one who took three strides. Again, the grammatical point regarding the unity of each pair of vowels, despite their difference in length, is mirrored by a statement about Kṛṣṇa: The same incarnation of Kṛṣṇa is known by different names in His short and His gigantic manifestations. These are just two of the numerous examples of the cleverness of Jīva Gosvāmī in composing this charming devotional grammatical treatise.

The BBT's Sanskrit School

A work such as this on such a complex topic as Sanskrit grammar and filled with many levels of meaning is extremely difficult to learn without the guidance of a deeply learned teacher. Fortunately, some of the most brilliant and devotionally mature Sanskritists among Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers have established a school in the holy pilgrimage place of Govardhana (near Vṛndāvana) for studying the Sanskrit literature of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition coming from Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. The school, Śrīmad-bhāgavata-vidyāpīṭham, is run under the direction of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust's senior Sanskritist, Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa. There, *Hari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa* is used as the foundation of studies. Students learn the intricacies of the language through an in-depth study of Jīva Gosvāmī's work, taught by Matsya Avatāra Dāsa, and apply what they have learned in reading the most elevated of all Sanskrit works, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* along with its commentaries. The first group of students at this school is living proof of the potency of Jīva Gosvāmī's work. Very quickly they are developing a deep expertise in the language and, simultaneously, a deep love for Kṛṣṇa. ❁

Dvija-maṇi Dāsa, a disciple of Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa, is a Benjamin Franklin Doctoral Fellow in Sanskrit at the University of Pennsylvania. He lives with his family at the Philadelphia ISKCON temple and is working with his guru on a translation, with commentary, of Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī's Manaḥ-śikṣā.

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

LORD VIṢṆU APPEARS AT THE SACRIFICE

After finishing his apologies to Lord Śiva, Dakṣa begins a new sacrifice, and Lord Viṣṇu appears on the scene.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 7

14 विद्यातपोव्रतधरान् मुखतः स्म विप्रान्
ब्रह्मात्मतत्त्वमवितुं प्रथमं त्वमस्राक्
तद्ब्राह्मणान् परम सर्वविपत्सु पासि
पालः पशूनिव विभो प्रगृहीतदण्डः

vidyā-tapo-vrata-dharān mukhataḥ sma viprān
brahmātma-tattvam avituṁ prathamaṁ tvam asrāk
tad brāhmaṇān parama sarva-vipatsu pāsi
pālaḥ paśūn iva vibho pragṛhīta-daṇḍaḥ

vidyā—learning; *tapaḥ*—austerities; *vrata*—vows; *dharān*—the followers; *mukhataḥ*—from the mouth; *sma*—was; *viprān*—the *brāhmaṇas; brahmā*—Lord Brahmā; *ātma-tattvam*—self-realization; *avitum*—to disseminate; *prathamam*—first; *tvam*—you; *asrāk*—created; *tat*—therefore; *brāhmaṇān*—the *brāhmaṇas; parama*—O great one; *sarva*—all; *vipatsu*—in dangers; *pāsi*—you protect; *pālaḥ*—like the protector; *paśūn*—the animals; *iva*—like; *vibho*—O great one; *pragṛhīta*—taking in hand; *daṇḍaḥ*—a stick.

My dear great and powerful Lord Śiva, you were created first from the mouth of Lord Brahmā in order to protect the brāhmaṇas in pursuing education, austerities, vows, and self-realization. As protector of the brāhmaṇas, you always protect the regulative principles they follow, just as a cowherd boy keeps a stick in his hand to give protection to the cows.

PURPORT (continued): It is also stated that the *brāhmaṇas* are produced from the mouth of the Supreme Lord. We should always remember that Lord Śiva is being addressed as the representative of the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu. ① In the Vedic literature it is described that the *brāhmaṇas* are born from the mouth of the universal form of Viṣṇu, the *kṣatriyas* are born from His arms, the *vaiśyas* from His

(1) From which parts of the Supreme Lord's body are the *brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas,* and *śūdras* born?

abdomen or waist, and the *śūdras* from His legs. In the formation of a body, the head is the principal factor. The *brāhmaṇas* are born from the mouth of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in order to accept charity for worship of Viṣṇu and to spread Vedic knowledge. Lord Śiva is known as *paśupati,* the protector of the *brāhmaṇas* and other living entities. He protects them from the attacks of non-*brāhmaṇas,* or uncultured persons who are against the self-realization process.

Another feature of this word is that persons who are simply attached to the ritualistic portion of the *Vedas* and do not understand the situation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are not any more advanced than animals. ② In the beginning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is confirmed that even though one performs the rituals of the *Vedas,* if he does not develop a sense of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then all his labor in performing Vedic rituals is considered to be simply a waste of time.

Lord Śiva's aim in destroying the Dakṣa *yajña* was to punish Dakṣa because by neglecting him (Lord Śiva), Dakṣa was committing a great offense. Lord Śiva's punishment was just like that of a cowherd boy, who keeps a stick to frighten his animals. It is commonly said that to give protection to animals, a stick is needed because animals cannot reason and argue. Their reasoning and argument is *argumentum ad baculum;* unless there is a rod, they do not obey. Force is required for the animalistic class of men, whereas those who are advanced are convinced by reasons, arguments, and scriptural authority. Persons who are simply attached to Vedic rituals, without further advancement of devotional service, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, are almost like animals, and Lord Śiva is in charge of giving them protection and sometimes punishing them, as he punished Dakṣa.

15 योऽसौ मयाविदिततत्त्वदृशा सभायां
क्षिप्तो दुरुक्तिविशिखैर्विगणय्य तन्माम्
अर्वाक् पतन्तमर्हत्तमनिन्दयापाद्
दृष्ट्यार्द्रया स भगवान् स्वकृतेन तुष्येत्

yo 'sau mayāvidita-tattva-dṛśā sabhāyāṁ
kṣipto durukti-viśikhair vigaṇayya tan māṁ
arvāk patantam arhattama-nindayāpād
dṛṣṭyārdrayā sa bhagavān sva-kṛtena tuṣyet

yaḥ—who; *asau*—that; *mayā*—by me; *avidita-tattva*—without knowing the actual fact; *dṛśā*—by experience; *sabhāyām*—in the assembly; *kṣiptaḥ*—was abused; *durukti*—unkind words; *viśikhaiḥ*—by the arrows of; *vigaṇayya*—taking no notice of; *tat*—that; *mām*—me; *arvāk*—downwards; *patantam*—gliding down to hell; *arhat-tama*—the most respectable; *nindayā*—by defamation; *apāt*—saved; *dṛṣṭyā*—seeing; *ārdrayā*—out of compassion; *saḥ*—that; *bhagavān*—Your Lordship; *sva-kṛtena*—by your own mercy; *tuṣyet*—be satisfied.

(2) What does the *Bhāgavatam* say about a person who performs Vedic rituals but does not develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

I did not know your full glories. For this reason, I threw arrows of sharp words at you in the open assembly, although you did not take them into account. I was going down to hell because of my disobedience to you, who are the most respectable personality, but you took compassion upon me and saved me by awarding punishment. I request that you be pleased by your own mercy, since I cannot satisfy you by my words.

PURPORT: As usual, a devotee in an adverse condition of life accepts such a condition to be the mercy of the Lord. Factually, the insulting words used by Dakṣa against Lord Śiva were enough to have him thrown perpetually into a hellish life. But Lord Śiva, being kind toward him, awarded him punishment to neutralize the offense. King Dakṣa realized this and, feeling obliged for Lord Śiva's magnanimous behavior, wanted to show his gratitude. Sometimes a father punishes his child, and when the child is grown up and comes to his senses, he understands that the father's punishment was not actually punishment but mercy. Similarly, Dakṣa appreciated that the punishment offered to him by Lord Śiva was a manifestation of Lord Śiva's mercy. That is the symptom of a person making progress on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is said that a devotee in Kṛṣṇa consciousness never takes any miserable condition of life to be condemnation by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He accepts the miserable condition to be the grace of the Lord. He thinks, "I would have been punished or put into a more dangerous condition of life due to my past misdeeds, but the Lord has protected me. Thus I have received only a little punishment as token execution of the law of karma." Thinking of His grace in that way, a devotee always surrenders to the Supreme Personality of Godhead more and more seriously and is not disturbed by such so-called punishment.

मैत्रेय उवाच
16 क्षमाप्यैवं स मीढ्वांसं ब्रह्मणा चानुमन्त्रितः
कर्म सन्तानयामास सोपाध्यायर्त्विगादिभिः

maitreya uvāca
kṣamāpyaivaṁ sa mīḍhvāṁsaṁ
brahmaṇā cānumantritaḥ

karma santānayām āsa
sopādhyāyartvig-ādibhiḥ

maitreyaḥ—the sage Maitreya; *uvāca*—said; *kṣamā*—forgiveness; *āpya*—receiving; *evam*—thus; *saḥ*—King Dakṣa; *mīḍhvāṁsam*—unto Lord Śiva; *brahmaṇā*—along with Lord Brahmā; *ca*—also; *anumantritaḥ*—being permitted; *karma*—the sacrifice; *santānayām āsa*—began again; *sa*—along with; *upādhyāya*—learned sages; *ṛtvik*—the priests; *ādibhiḥ*—and others.

The great sage Maitreya said: Thus being pardoned by Lord Śiva, King Dakṣa, with the permission of Lord Brahmā, again began the performance of the yajña, along with the great learned sages, the priests, and others.

17 वैष्णवं यज्ञसन्तत्यै त्रिकपालं द्विजोत्तमाः
पुरोडाशं निरवपन् वीरसंसर्गशुद्धये

vaiṣṇavaṁ yajña-santatyai
tri-kapālaṁ dvijottamāḥ
puroḍāśaṁ niravapan
vīra-saṁsarga-śuddhaye

vaiṣṇavam—meant for Lord Viṣṇu or His devotees; *yajña*—sacrifice; *santatyai*—for performances; *tri-kapālam*—three kinds of offerings; *dvija-uttamāḥ*—the best of the *brāhmaṇas; puroḍāśam*—the oblation called *puroḍāśa; niravapan*—offered; *vīra*—Vīrabhadra and other followers of Lord Śiva; *saṁsarga*—contamination (*doṣa*) due to his touching; *śuddhaye*—for purification.

Thereafter, in order to resume the activities of sacrifice, the brāhmaṇas first arranged to purify the sacrificial arena of the contamination caused by the touch of Vīrabhadra and the other ghostly followers of Lord Śiva. Then they arranged to offer into the fire the oblations known as puroḍāśa.

PURPORT: Lord Śiva's followers and devotees, headed by Vīrabhadra, are known as *vīras,* and they are ghostly demons. Not only did they pollute the entire sacrificial arena by their very presence, but they disturbed the whole situation by passing stool and urine. Therefore, the infection they had created was to be first purified by the method of offering *puroḍāśa* oblations.

A *viṣṇu-yajña,* or an offering to Lord Viṣṇu, cannot be performed uncleanly. To offer anything in an unclean state is called a *sevāparādha.* The worship of the Viṣṇu Deity in the temple is also *viṣṇu-yajña.* In all Viṣṇu temples, therefore, the priest who takes care of the *arcanā-vidhi* must be very clean. Everything should be always kept neat and clean, and the foodstuffs should be prepared in a neat and clean manner. All these regulative principles are described in *The Nectar of Devotion.* There are thirty-two kinds of offenses in discharging *arcanā* service. It is required, therefore, that one be extremely careful not to be unclean.

③ Generally, whenever any ritualistic ceremony is begun, the holy name of Lord Viṣṇu is first chanted in order to purify the situation. Whether one is in a pure or impure condition, internally or externally, if one chants or even remembers the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Viṣṇu, one immediately becomes purified. The *yajña* arena was desecrated by the presence of Lord Śiva's followers, headed by Vīrabhadra, and therefore the entire arena had to be sanctified. Although Lord Śiva was present and he is all-auspicious, it was still necessary to sanctify the place because his followers had broken into the arena and committed so many obnoxious acts. That sanctification was possible only by chanting the holy name of Viṣṇu, Trikapāla, which can sanctify the three worlds. In other words, it is admitted herein that the followers of Lord Śiva are generally unclean. They are not even very hygienic; they do not take baths regularly, they wear long hair, and they smoke *gāñjā.* Persons of such irregular habits are counted amongst the ghosts. Since they were present in the sacrificial arena, the atmosphere became polluted, and it had to be sanctified by *trikapāla* oblations, which indicated the invocation of Viṣṇu's favor.

18 अध्वर्युणात्तहविषा यजमानो विशाम्पते
धिया विशुद्धया दध्यौ तथा प्रादुरभूद्धरिः

adhvaryuṇātta-haviṣā
yajamāno viśāmpate
dhiyā viśuddhayā dadhyau
tathā prādurabhūd dhariḥ

adhvaryuṇā—with the *Yajur Veda; ātta*—taking; *haviṣā*—with clarified butter; *yajamānaḥ*—King Dakṣa; *viśām-pate*—O Vidura; *dhiyā*—in meditation; *viśuddhayā*—sanctified; *dadhyau*—offered; *tathā*—immediately; *prāduḥ*—manifest; *abhūt*—became; *hariḥ*—Hari, the Lord.

The great sage Maitreya said to Vidura: My dear Vidura, as soon as King Dakṣa offered the clarified butter with Yajur Veda mantras in sanctified meditation, Lord Viṣṇu appeared there in His original form as Nārāyaṇa.

PURPORT: Lord Viṣṇu is all-pervading. Any devotee who, in sanctified meditation, following the regulative principles, chants the required mantras in service and in a devotional mood can see Viṣṇu. It is said in the *Brahma-*

(3) What is generally done to purify the situation before a *yajña* is performed?

saṁhitā ④ that a devotee whose eyes are anointed with the ointment of love of Godhead can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead always within his heart. Lord Śyāmasundara is so kind to His devotee.

19 तदा स्वप्रभया तेषां द्योतयन्त्या दिशो दश
मुष्णंस्तेज उपानीतस्तार्क्ष्येण स्तोत्रवाजिना

tadā sva-prabhayā teṣāṁ
dyotayantyā diśo daśa
muṣṇaṁs teja upānītas
tārkṣyeṇa stotra-vājinā

tadā—at that time; *sva-prabhayā*—by His own effulgence; *teṣām*—all of them; *dyotayantyā*—by brightness; *diśaḥ*—directions; *daśa*—ten; *muṣṇan*—diminishing; *tejaḥ*—effulgence; *upānītaḥ*—brought; *tārkṣyeṇa*—by Garuḍa; *stotra-vājinā*—whose wings are called Bṛhat and Rathantara.

Lord Nārāyaṇa was seated on the shoulder of Stotra, or Garuḍa, who had big wings. As soon as the Lord appeared, all directions were illuminated, diminishing the luster of Brahmā and the others present.

PURPORT: A description of Nārāyaṇa is given in the following two *ślokas.*

20 श्यामो हिरण्यरशनोऽर्ककिरीटजुष्टो
नीलालकभ्रमरमण्डितकुण्डलास्यः
शङ्खाब्जचक्रशरचापगदासिचर्म-
व्यग्रैर्हिरण्मयभुजैरिव कर्णिकारः

śyāmo hiraṇya-raśano 'rka-kirīṭa-juṣṭo
nīlālaka-bhramara-maṇḍita-kuṇḍalāsyaḥ
śaṅkhābja-cakra-śara-cāpa-gadāsi-carma-
vyagrair hiraṇmaya-bhujair iva karṇikāraḥ

śyāmaḥ—blackish; *hiraṇya-raśanaḥ*—a garment like gold; *arka-kirīṭa-juṣṭaḥ*—with a helmet as dazzling as the sun; *nīla-alaka*—bluish curls; *bhramara*—big black bees; *maṇḍita-kuṇḍala-āsyaḥ*—having a face decorated with earrings; *śaṅkha*—conchshell; *abja*—lotus flower; *cakra*—wheel; *śara*—arrows; *cāpa*—bow; *gadā*—club; *asi*—sword; *carma*—shield; *vyagraiḥ*—filled with; *hiraṇmaya*—golden (bracelets and bangles); *bhujaiḥ*—with hands; *iva*—as; *karṇikāraḥ*—flower tree.

His complexion was blackish, His garment yellow like gold, and His helmet as dazzling as the sun. His hair was bluish, the color of black bees, and His face was decorated with earrings. ⑤ His eight hands held a conch shell, wheel, club, lotus flower, arrow, bow, shield, and sword, and they were decorated with golden ornaments such as bangles and bracelets. His whole body resembled a blossoming tree beautifully decorated with various kinds of flowers.

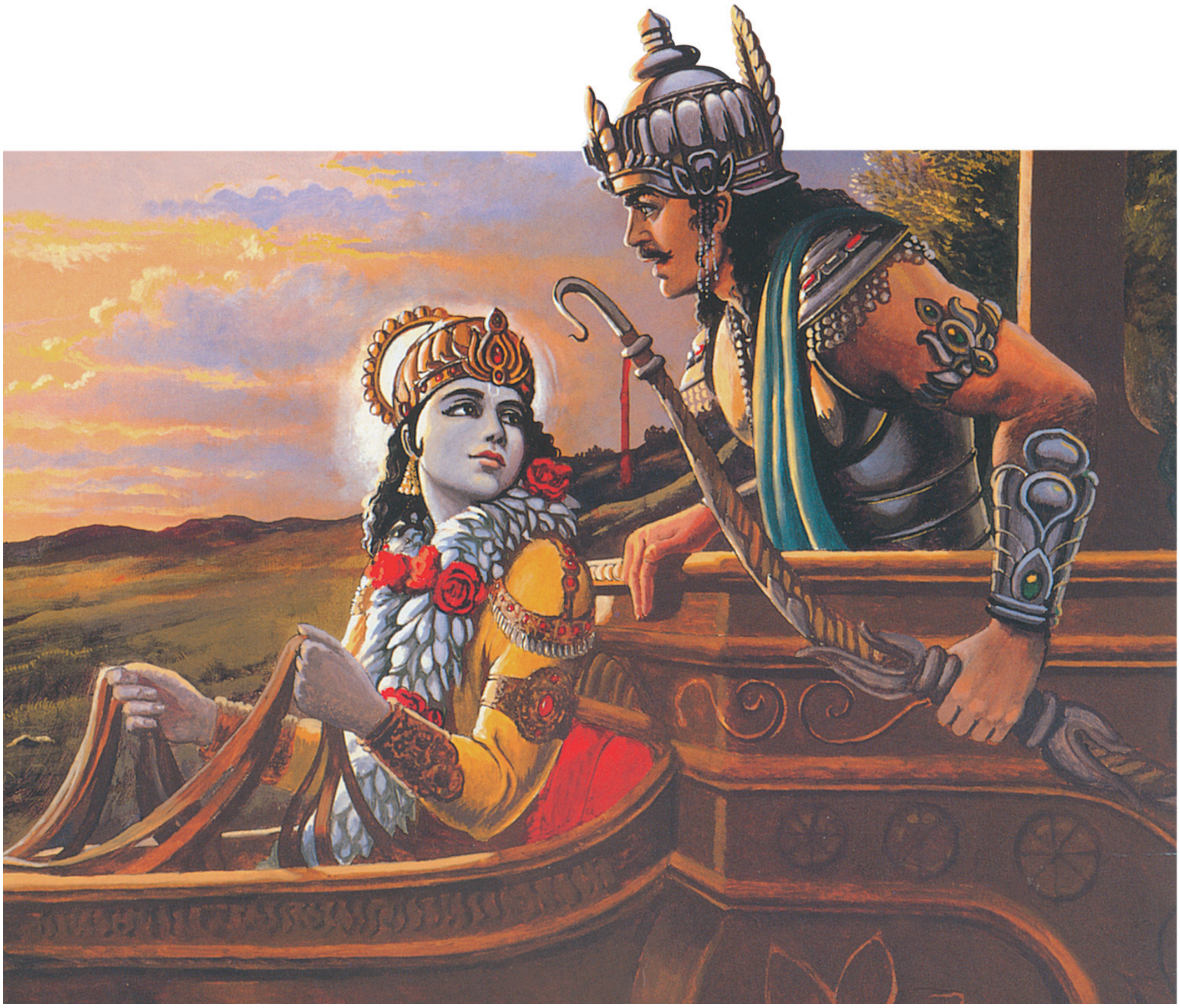
PURPORT: The face of Lord Viṣṇu as described in this verse appears like a lotus flower with bees humming over it. All of the ornaments on the body of Lord Viṣṇu resemble molten gold of the reddish-gold color of the morning sunrise. The Lord appears, just as the morning sun rises, to protect the whole universal creation. His arms display different weapons, and His eight hands are compared to the eight petals of a lotus flower. All the weapons mentioned are for the protection of His devotees.

Generally in the four hands of Viṣṇu there are a wheel, club, conch shell, and lotus flower. These four symbols are seen in the four hands of Viṣṇu in different arrangements. ⑥ The club and the wheel are the Lord's symbols of punishment for the demons and miscreants, and the lotus and conch shell are used to bless the devotees.

There are always two classes of men, the devotees and the demons. As confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (*paritrāṇāya sādhūnām* [Bg. 4.8]), the Lord is always ready for the protection of the devotees and annihilation of the demons. There are demons and devotees in this material world, but in the spiritual world there is no such distinction. In other words, Lord Viṣṇu is the proprietor of both the material and spiritual worlds. In the material world almost everyone is of the demoniac nature, but there are also devotees, who appear to be in the material world although they are always situated in the spiritual world. A devotee's position is always transcendental, and he is always protected by Lord Viṣṇu.

[*continued in the next issue*]

(4) According to the *Brahma-saṁhitā,* how can the devotee see Lord Śyāmasundara within the heart?
(5) What symbols did Lord Viṣṇu carry in His eight hands when He appeared at the sacrifice?
(6) Of Lord Viṣṇu's four main symbols, what are the club and wheel used for? What are the lotus and conch shell used for?


Detail from a painting by Philip Malpass

Looking into the Structure of
BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

Understanding the levels of instruction in the Gītā *can help us comprehend the overall unity of Lord Kṛṣṇa's message.*

by Īśvara Kṛṣṇa Dāsa

THE *Bhagavad-gītā* is no doubt a major spiritual treatise and one of the world's greatest classics. Understanding that a hierarchical concept of reality characterizes the *Gītā* can help us see coherence of the *Gītā's* message.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* speaks on two major levels of reality and a third, intermediate, one. We can use the Sanskrit words *dharma* and *mokṣa* to treat the two main levels, and the word *yoga* for the third. *Dharma* refers to a set of values representing duty, religion, morality, law, order, and justice, which together sustain civilized human life. *Yoga* refers to the attempt to detach oneself from worldly life while trying to yoke oneself to the liberated state. *Mokṣa* refers to the liberated state of perfection and eternal existence in pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The level of *dharma* represents the human or worldly condition, the

Above: Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks the Bhagavad-gītā *to His friend and disciple Arjuna.*

level of *mokṣa* represents the real or absolute condition (liberation), and the level of *yoga* is intermediate. We can also define these three levels as the finite, the intermediate, and the infinite.

We can distinguish each level in terms of values and "being." For *dharma,* the general rule in terms of value is to prosper. At this level, one desires worldly happiness and prosperity, seeing these as good. In terms of being, one see the living entity as the body, whether as a human being or as some other species.

On the second level (*yoga*), one rejects worldly prosperity, valuing instead detachment from the world and indifference to both worldly happiness and worldly distress. On this level, one also yokes oneself to a higher reality, that of *mokṣa*. In *yoga,* one values the superiority of being equal-minded towards both happiness and distress and seeking absorption in Brahman. In terms of being, one no longer perceives of oneself or others as the body but as eternal spirit souls bound by the laws of *saṁsāra.*

As a practical scripture, the Bhagavad-gītā offers the means for crossing the gap between dharma and mokṣa.

On the third level (*mokṣa*), one replaces the indifference and detachment of the second level with deep love and attachment for the Supreme Person. As for being, the awakened spirit soul of the second level now becomes a pure servant and a lover of the Supreme Person.

The three levels represent internal mental states or attitudes. Thus, one who sees the world from the point of view of the first level is convinced that he is a human being and that his aim is to prosper. On the second level, one is convinced that he is an embodied spiritual self and that his aim is to get released from that condition. On the third level, one sees the Supreme Lord everywhere and tries to love and serve Him.

We can use a three-story house as a metaphor. Each story contains unlimited opportunities and paths. Moreover, the residents of each floor have their own language, terms, and assumptions. In a sense, the *Bhagavad-gītā* speaks in three languages and constantly moves between the three levels. Once we recognise which level a particular text or section is on, that text or section becomes intelligible and we can see how it is consistent with the rest of the treatise.

Shifting Between Metaphysical Levels

When Arjuna argues against fighting the war, he does so from the first level. We can examine his arguments according to the two parameters previously mentioned: values and being. Regarding values, it is clear that underlying Arjuna's speech is the desire to achieve worldly prosperity. One of his main points is that the war would cause the decline of *dharma* and the rise of *adharma,* and thus suffering would come upon the world. As he believes that prosperity is good, he objects to the war. In terms of being, Arjuna thinks of himself and the others there as human beings.

Kṛṣṇa doesn't answer Arjuna directly, but raises the conversation to the second level. In Kṛṣṇa's reply the values He propounds are utterly different; Kṛṣṇa does not accept the idea that worldly prosperity is good, but calls for indifference to (and endurance of) both worldly happiness and worldly distress. He says these are impermanent and produced by sensual perception alone. As for being, Kṛṣṇa does not refer to the soldiers present as human beings; rather, He refers to them as spirit souls.

By not directly answering Arjuna's doubts about fighting, Kṛṣṇa performs a kind of a "Copernican revolution," changing the underlying assumptions of the conversation. Arjuna argues that killing his relatives is bad, an obvious first-story statement that assumes that people are subjected to death and that death is to be avoided as far as possible for the sake of a prosperous life. Kṛṣṇa doesn't answer Arjuna's arguments, but shifts the conversation to a different level altogether and speaks out of different assumptions. Basically He says that death doesn't exist at all (a second-story assumption) and therefore He doesn't see much logic in Arjuna's arguments. Also, Kṛṣṇa challenges Arjuna's idea that worldly prosperity and happiness are good and to be desired. He propounds the idea that indifference to both happiness and distress is good and desirable. As such, He speaks from a second-story position.

The Bhagavad-gītā's Transformational Aspect

As a practical scripture, *Bhagavad-gītā* offers the means for crossing the gap between the first level (*dharma*) and the third (*mokṣa*). Mere following of *dharma* while avoiding *adharma* is not sufficient to attain the stage of *mokṣa.* One needs a different type of endeavor or path. This process or enterprise is sometimes called self-realization, and it involves a transformational path by which one progresses step by step, thus making advancement from the lower level to the higher one. What practical means or system does the *Bhagavad-gītā* offer?

A major question raised in the *Bhagavad-gītā* is whether one should choose the path of action or the path of contemplation. Arjuna raises the question twice, at the beginning of the third and fifth chapters. The *Bhagavad-gītā* clearly recommends the path of action as the means by which the performer is to be elevated all the way from the level of *dharma* to the state of *mokṣa.* One performs this uplifting action according to one's *dharma* and continues to work within the dharmic framework all along the way. Thus, Kṛṣṇa encourages Arjuna throughout their conversation to follow his *dharma* and fight. However, as the text progresses, Arjuna's motives for fighting are refined. Kṛṣṇa shows Arjuna how he can fight in higher and higher inner states of consciousness. Thus, although externally we continue to carry out our prescribed duty, we undergo an internal transformation through sublimation or purification of our motives for performing action. In this way a kind of ladder is formed, by which one rises higher and higher, from *dharma* to *mokṣa,* along the path of self-realization.

Textual References For the Ladder of Motives

At the lowest stage, one's actions are motivated by utilitarianism, or the desire to achieve something for oneself. Kṛṣṇa first uses a utilitarian argument to try to convince Arjuna to take up arms. He assumes that Arjuna aspires to accumulate gain, such as fame, and argues that by withdrawing from the battle, Arjuna will lose his fame.

Kṛṣṇa's next argument is also utilitarian, but is somewhat higher in that it accepts scriptural authority by stating that warriors who die in battle attain heaven. Thus we can call this stage the stage of "religious utilitarianism" or "dharmic utilitarianism."

In other words, Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to follow *dharma* to achieve some end in this life or the next. Still higher is following *dharma* for its own sake, or performing one's duty for the sake of duty. That stage represents a pure mode of action, free from desire for its fruits, and is one of the central teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā.* It is still within the first story, however, as it doesn't include an awareness of the ultimate good, which according to the *Bhagavad-gītā* is release from *saṁsāra.* Still, those who follow *dharma* for its own sake reach the top of the first level and can progress further, into the next stage.

The next stage rejects the value of the *Vedas,* considered to be engaged with worldly gains, in favor of a higher ideal: the attainment of Brahman. We can call this stage "action for the sake of the highest good (Brahman)." He who thus acts is situated in the second level, characterised by various yoga processes. He may act now in *karma-yoga;* uninterested in the fruits of his actions, he offers those fruits to the Supreme. He may practice *jñāna-yoga*, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga,* or *bhakti-yoga*. All these yoga practices have the common goal of detaching oneself from worldly existence and attachments and fixing oneself to the Supreme. Enlightenment and renunciation characterize the stage of yoga. Having perfected that stage, we finally elevate ourself to the third story, that of *mokṣa,* and continue to carry out our duty in a deep, pure, spontaneous, and unalloyed mood of loving devotion unto Kṛṣṇa.

We've added some steps to our basic three-step ladder. Now we can summarize the stages as simple utilitarianism, dharmic utilitarianism, duty for its own sake, acting for the sake of the highest good or Brahman, the stage of *yoga,* and the stage of *mokṣa* or pure devotion. On this ladder of motives, the higher one's motive for action is, the higher one is situated in the *Bhagavad-gītā's* metaphysical structure. In this way the *Bhagavad-gītā* encompasses the entire realm of existence while encouraging all to ascend the ladder of motives, thus distancing oneself from *saṁsāra* and absorbing oneself in Brahman. Following this structure, a student can make sense of the *Bhagavad-gītā* as a coherent theological-philosophical treatise, firmly tied together as a single and unified text. It can offer a model for a three-story house in which the whole world can reside.

Īśvara Kṛṣṇa Dāsa joined ISKCON in Israel in 1981. He returned to college in 1991 and earned four academic degrees. He has published a Bhagavad-gītā *translation and commentary in Hebrew. He lives in Israel with his wife, Rādhā Mādhāva Sakhī Devī Dāsī, along with their three children, and teaches at the University of Haifa.*

DO YOU LIVE FAR FROM A TEMPLE?

There may be Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees near you who hold regular get-togethers or want to start them. We don't have room for these gatherings on the Centers list we print in the magazine, but our online list includes many of them. To find out if there's a regular Kṛṣṇa conscious program near you, or to list your own, log on to Krishna.com and click on "Address List" on the home page.

In your own

What did you think the first time you saw Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees?

It was 1972 —

the last phase of the Vietnam war, and the beginning of martial arts mania. My favorite TV show was *Kung Fu,* starring David Carradine with his saffron robes and wise philosophical teachings. I was a police officer in Nashville, Tennessee, and a Vietnam veteran. The last thing I expected to see on my tour of duty was a saffron-clad devotee distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. My first thought upon seeing him was, "Here is a Kung Fu master like David Carradine." But then I noticed he wasn't beating up anyone—rather he seemed to be peddling a large armful of magazines and books. After an intense investigation, I was so impressed by this devotee and the *Back to Godhead* magazine and *Kṛṣṇa* books he was selling, I later quit the department and became a full-time book distributor at the Atlanta temple.

Rādhākānta Dāsa
Nashville, Tennessee

I was on my way to a recording session

in New York City. All of a sudden, a Martian in orange clothes appeared out of nowhere. He spun around, handed me a card, and then vanished from sight. The recording session that followed was a nightmare and a complete disaster. On the way home I was so miserable that all I could do was follow the instructions on the bottom of the card: "Chant this mantra and your life will be sublime." I chanted all the way home, and when I got there the first thing I said to my girlfriend was, "We've got to stop having sex and become spiritual." She threw me out of the house, yelling and screaming. That day was the begining of my surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Approximately a year later I joined the temple in New York.

Nirantara Dāsa
Torrance, California

It was around Diwali time

in the year 2000. Every year in Trinidad at this time there is a week-long exhibition, consisting mainly of Indian clothing, accessories, and other general items. There was also an ISKCON booth there.

I visited the place with my friends, and while walking around, we saw the devotees. They were singing and dancing. The music sounded beautiful, and I was immediately moved by it.

"Let's dance," I said.

"After you," someone replied.

I jumped in and started to dance. My friends abandoned me, leaving me alone, but I didn't care. Finally, after half an hour, they gave up and joined me. We danced and chanted for hours. It was an amazing experience. I'd never felt anything like it.

Since then I have been going back every year just to experience that sweet nectar.

Chandra N.
Caroni, Trinidad

Yamarāja Dāsa

words . . .

Pentip photographer: Andrea Leone | Agency: Dreamstime.com

When I was in the fourth grade

I was obsessed with playing video games. My favorite game of all time was one where the main character would travel around the world and unlock the mysteries of various religious and mystical traditions. At one stage the character flew into the airport. There, on my monitor was a little man dancing and playing cymbals in a pink robe with sandals. You could hear the cymbals chiming, and he would chase the main character around until he left the airport.

After seeing this a few times I asked my dad, "What is this all about?"

My dad replied, "Oh! Those guys. They forced me to buy a book in the airport once."

The devotees may not have made the best impression on my dad. But it would be hard to say that both he and I are not benefitting from that book or that most wonderful video game.

Ārya Siddhānta Dāsa
Alachua, Florida

I first met devotees when I saw them chanting

at lunchtime on Oxford Street, London, towards the end of the summer of 1987. I was aware of Hare Kṛṣṇas, but not familiar with the tenets of their religion, and very skeptical about religion in general at the time. So when one of them tried to grab me and coax me to join the chanting, I firmly told him to leave me alone. My impressson of the devotees as I left was not very positive.

But years later, while I was living in Italy, the devotees made another appeareance. This time it was via the radio waves: Radio Krishna Centrale. I just turned the radio on, moved the tuner, and here they were again. Yet this time I was hooked. I listened to their broadcasts daily, and gradually become convinced.

Looking back, I now understand that sound is more powerful and convincing than sight.

Paul Musu
London, England

When, in 1976, I left India

for America, I had sincerely prayed that somehow I would encounter the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa there. What I got was an invitation to a "Hare Krishna Sunday Love Feast," which I accepted suspiciously, expecting a hippie commune. But as I entered their Potomac center, to my surprise it smelt so much like the sweet aroma of a temple. As the devotees filed into the temple and started chanting in a sweet melody, I stared wide-eyed at their traditional attire and clean-shaven heads. But even more priceless was the stunned and ecstatic feeling I got when the curtains opened, my jaw dropped, and I saw the familiar face of Kṛṣṇa standing before me—in a place I had least expected.

Geetha Shenoy
West Simsbury, Connecticut

One day, when my son Bivek

was two years old, there was a buzz at the gate. He trotted along to see who it was and came running back to me.

"Mummy, Kṛṣṇa is at the gate. Come and open it quickly. Quick, quick, mummy."

He was so excited that Kṛṣṇa had come to visit him. Now almost twelve years old, Bivek still always says that he saw Kṛṣṇa at the gate that morning.

But it had been, of course, a devotee.

Shakun Rajbansi
Durban, South Africa

HERE'S THE NEXT QUESTION:

If money was not an issue, what one thing would you do to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Go to Krishna.com/inyourownwords and let us know. (Please keep your answer to under 150 words.)

NOT SUCH A BRIGHT IDEA

In one corner, a new breed of atheist. In the other, a knowledge older than time itself. Who's really turning towards the light?

by Madhava Smullen

KṚṢNA consciousness is a delusion, scarcely distinguishable from such childhood inventions as the imaginary friend or the bogeyman under the bed. It is not based on a single fragment of reason or evidence, but rather on a fanatical blind faith. As for God, He is nothing but the projection of a childish wish for parental protection from the sufferings of human existence. So if you really want to develop a positive attitude towards life and be free to concentrate on the only life you are ever going to live, forget religion. You'll be much better off without it.

Or so the self-proclaimed "brights" would have us believe.

Coined in March 2003 by husband and wife team Paul Geisert and Mynga Futrell, the term borrows heavily from homosexuals' hijacking of the word *gay* to create a positive impression of themselves. Why shouldn't atheists, or, to use Futrell's definition, "persons who have a worldview free of supernatural and mystical elements," have a positive umbrella term too? British evolutionary biologist and renowned atheist Richard Dawkins thought so, and soon jumped on the bandwagon with articles in the *Guardian* and *Wired.* The concept took off. Today, the online Brights Network claims there are "thousands of brights now in 79 nations."

But hold on a second. Let's backtrack here. If those who don't believe in God and hold empirical science as the supreme means to the truth are bright, then what is everyone else? Dim?

Well, maybe they are. Maybe Kṛṣṇa consciousness really isn't based on any reason or evidence. Maybe the only absolute truth out there is that which can be garnered from empirical science.

Let's find out.

That's the Limit

In a March 2006 article for *Science and Theology News,* Nigel Brush, a scientist himself, says he wondered about science's self-imposed monopoly on the human quest for truth and began to explore its limitations.

There were, he discovered, quite a few.

To begin with, it's quite obvious straight from the outset that scientific truth is not absolute. It continues to change, the scientific truths of today becoming the scientific falsehoods of tomorrow. Imagine the ridicule you'd face if you went around claiming, as scientists did fervently in the 1400s, that the Earth was flat, or that the sun revolved around the Earth rather than vice versa.

And recent developments are no different. The July 2004 issue of *New Scientist* reported, "After

Lightbulb image provided by Dreamstime.com
Montage by Yamarāja Dāsa

nearly thirty years of arguing that a black hole destroys everything that falls into it, Stephen Hawking is saying he was wrong. It seems that black holes may after all allow information within them to escape.”

Some may be surprised to learn that this glaring error earned Hawking praise rather than a verbal thrashing. Yet advocates of the empiric worldview see nothing wrong. They argue that to recognize errors and correct them is a strength, not a weakness. And this is fine, as long as they admit that science is only an attempt to understand the world we live in, and nothing more.

The Kṛṣṇa conscious, or bhakti-yoga, method of acquiring truth is far more reasonable than empiric science.

It certainly isn’t the absolute truth. Why not?

Because scientists are humans, and humans, unguided by perfect authority, are fallible. Vedic scripture states that anyone born through the material energy must be subject to the four material deficiencies: *bhrama* (the tendency to commit mistakes), *pramāda* (the tendency to be illusioned), *vipralipsā* (the tendency to cheat) and *karaṇāpāṭava* (imperfect senses). True, highly developed technology has increased scientists’ capability to understand the world around them. But it is still just an extension of their five senses.

According to Nigel Brush, objectivity is further marred by the fact that scientists are not born scientists. These people are not bloodless cyborgs with programmed missions that they cannot deviate from. They all started out the same way as anyone else—wearing their birthday suits and screaming helplessly. They all had unique upbringings and experiences, were all influenced by parents, friends, and role models. And they continue to be—if they’ve got any sort of social lives. All this colors their conclusions, making it impossible for science to retain its claim of cold, research-based, one hundred percent objectivity.

The final blow is the instability of empiricism itself.

“Contrary to popular belief,” Brush writes, “facts do not speak for themselves.”

And this is true. The empiric observation “the water is green” may be a fact, but it carries little meaning until it is interpreted. For example, the water could be green because there is green seaweed at the bottom, or because the bottom is lined with a certain kind of stone, or—who knows?—someone might have gotten creative and poured a bucket of green dye in there. Thus, we often find two scientists using the same body of data to arrive at totally different conclusions. So once again, how can scientists claim that their knowledge is absolute?

If you still need more convincing, next time a “bright” tells you that empirical science is the only way to understand the truth, remember that this is a self-defeating statement.

Try shooting back: “So if that’s your opinion, can you empirically prove it?”

That should leave them feeling pretty confused.

Straight to the Source

So we’ve established that empiric science is limited as a means to acquire ultimate truth. But what’s so great about Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

The brights’ favorite way to denigrate religion is to say it is based on blind faith and is a veritable vacuum of reason. This they do by wielding attacks about as mature as playground taunts. Take for instance this one by Richard Dawkins: “Believing in God is like believing in a teapot orbiting Mars.” Or my personal favorite from Daniel C. Dennett: “We don’t believe in elves, goblins, the Easter bunny or God.”

Yet the fact is that the Kṛṣṇa conscious, or *bhakti-yoga,* method of acquiring truth is far more reasonable than empiric science, and I’m not just talking about the eloquence of its advocates.

Let’s imagine you’re in your local grocery store. You look around at the shelves stacked with fruit and vegetables, with cans of preserves and boxes of cereal. You gaze around at the huge building housing it all. And you wonder, “How did all this get here?”

Now, you could theorize about all sorts of answers to this question. You could bring a group of your friends along and start coming up with all sorts of ideas: Maybe the company brought builders and contractors in and constructed the building as a store from scratch. Or perhaps the building already existed in some other capacity and was bought out by the company. Or you might suggest—if it was a particularly late night—that the whole operation had just materialized out of nothing.

Or you could simply ask a member of the staff who learned what happened from the owner.

In Vedic terms, the guessing method is called *aroha pantha.* It uses one’s imperfect senses. The other method, *avaroha pantha,* discards all mental speculation and cuts straight to the supreme source. How does one do this? Who is that staff member who knows the owner?

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.34) Krsna Himself tells us: “Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth."

Of course, not just anyone can be a spiritual master. And this is where reason once again plays its part. The serious seeker must be selective and able to distinguish real teachers from cheap imposters pursuing fame and wealth. A true spiritual master has studied and realized the scriptures, and practices what he preaches. Perhaps even more important, he conveys to his disciples without change the exact message of the original spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa. As the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.3.19) says, *dharmaṁ tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam:* the path of religion is directly enunciated by the Lord, no one else. What better source to learn about ultimate reality from than the ultimate authority, the person who created it?

Naturally, the brights would slam accepting authority rather than using "reason and evidence."

"How do you know that what your authorities are saying is true?" they'd argue.

But it's an argument that can be fired right back in their face: They also accept authority. Every bright ascribes to certain conclusions of scientists, yet cannot verify them, because they do not have the equipment used to achieve these conclusions, nor the knowledge to use it.

Enter Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or *bhakti-yoga,* the real science, unrestricted by naturalistic or mechanistic worldviews. Like the brights, we followers of *bhakti* also accept the word of people whose realizations we may not yet be able to verify. Yet where scientists' senses are imperfect and their conclusions plagued with subjectivity, we accept authorities whose conclusions don't rely exclusively on sensory data and are one hundred per cent objective because they stem from God Himself. And where science constantly adjusts its reality, we accept authorities whose version of the truth never changes.

The brights insist that their moniker is simply a positive term, not a boast. But it's obviously a conscious statement that atheism is enlightening. In a 2005 interview, Richard Dawkins mourned that America is slipping into a Dark Age because so many people believe in God.

"But," he added chirpily, "don't despair—the broad direction of history is towards enlightenment."

As if in direct answer to Dawkins and his ilk, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport to the *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.4-5: "Those who are free from the illusory energy, those who are confident that they are not the material body, that they are spiritual parts of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and who are therefore engaged in the transcendental service of the Supreme Godhead, have nothing to fear. Their future is very bright."

Yes, we do live in a free world. Sure, people are entitled to call themselves whatever they want.

But we'll leave you to decide which method of discovering the truth should be labeled "bright."

Madhava Smullen grew up in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in Ireland. He now serves on the editorial staff of Back to Godhead.

LETTERS

(*continued from page 5*)

Why Does Kṛṣṇa Not Come?

People are getting a lot of suffering today. Why is Kṛṣṇa not coming to help in this age, Kali-yuga?

Naveen Narayanan
Via the Internet

Our reply: In this age, Kṛṣṇa is coming to help in at least five ways:

1. Kṛṣṇa spoke *Bhagavad-gīta* just as Kali-yuga was beginning.
2. As Vyāsadeva, he gave us *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* which can deliver us from the evils of this age.
3. He has appeared as His holy name.
4. He came as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu and showed by His personal example how to perfect our spiritual lives.
5. He sent Śrīla Prabhupāda to spread knowledge of Kṛṣṇa all over the world through his ISKCON movement.

Kṛṣṇa is helping us, but because we ignore His help we suffer. If we take shelter of the five manifestations of Kṛṣṇa described above, we will not suffer but will feel transcendental bliss, and we will dedicate our lives to connecting others to Kṛṣṇa by sharing this information with them.

Replies to the questions were written by Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā Dāsa.

Please write to us at: BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA.
E-mail: editors@krishna.com.

LOOKING FOR NEWS OF THE HARE KṚṢṆA MOVEMENT?

Log on to www.ISKCON.com.

The Internet is the ideal place for timely news, and ISKCON.com, run by ISKCON Communications, maintains an active news page. So whether you want to see what's happening in ISKCON or have some news to report, log on to www.ISKCON.com.

Gadgets & Gratitude

To be truly beneficial, our insights into the futility of materialism must be informed by higher knowledge.

by Kṛṣṇa Rāginī Devī Dāsī

ON ENTERING a bookshop, I received a complimentary copy of a new magazine promoting the latest hi-tech gadgetry. An interview with people from different walks of life and their favorite gadgets caught my attention. A teenage girl admitted she lives totally dependent on hers, while a film director declared how he hates to be dependent on his hi-tech toys.

The girl went on to express her penchant for being busy and having fun. Without her iPod she can't work out, without her Palm Pilot she can't stay on top of her schedules, and without her mobile phone she can't keep in close touch with her friends. If every minute is not filled, her life feels empty.

On the other hand, the film director abhors his dependence on a mere object like a phone, but admits he cannot function without it. Still, he's embarrassed by his permanent contact with material things.

"I express such contradictions in my films," he says, "because it translates to the world I live in. We live lost in a strange world . . ."

Obviously his situation puzzles him. Attachment to matter—dull, and inferior to the spirit soul—is embarrassing yet unavoidable. He is like a person eating sweets while reciting the harmful effects of sugar. One can guess what he might say about his films: "The conclusion of all my films is that we are pitiable persons. Life is always frustrating, and our salvation lies somewhere beyond our grasp."

The teenage girl is trying to escape the emptiness of life, while the film director contemplates its absurdity.

Admiration For Creative Ability

"Still, isn't there anything you like about gadgets?" the interviewer insists.

"Yes, there is something" he muses. "I admire the ability involved in creating such a thing, the same way I admire a good film."

I wonder if he knows what it actually is that he admires.

These abilities—the intelligence and inspiration to create a new film or gadget—are supplied by Kṛṣṇa. As He is all-attractive, whatever wonderful thing we find in this world is, as the *Bhagavad-gītā* says, but a spark of His splendor. Without acknowledging this, one can end up like the director, a prisoner in a world for which he finds no meaning.

A light bulb has a purpose when it sheds light for his owner. If not useful anymore, we throw it away. When the bulb doesn't serve its purpose, we see no meaning to it. But, originally, it was made by someone to fulfill a specific purpose.

Similarly, Kṛṣṇa gives us many abilities and the necessary ingredients within this world to serve Him. When not engaged in His service, those things become like light bulbs that shed no light. One sees no purpose in them.

The creation does not come from the interaction of matter, but from God. It is the Lord's potency, and one has to face the power of the material world. For instance, when we experience an emotional shock at receiving some devastating news, the experience has great force and intensity. It can cause us

to behave completely different than we would normally. The shock appears and, after some time, disappears, but its experience has power to completely change one's life perspective. The energy of the shock is real because it is the energy of the Supreme—hence its overwhelming force. Being issued from the Absolute Truth, the material world is real, created by Kṛṣṇa to teach us. We call it illusory only because it is temporary.

Sometimes, a shock can shake loose thick layers of misconceptions from our hearts and make us see our real self. When a person's house is on fire, he will grab what is essential, leaving the rest behind, before running for his life. Dramatic events can make us see who we are in essence and what is really important when it comes to making a choice. Our spiritual nature—our very essence—lies dormant. But it can reveal its presence and ultimate importance under the great force of the material energy.

Impersonalistic Misconceptions

Impersonalists take the material world as false (or meaningless) and recommend giving up activity altogether. They see devotional activities meant for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord as illusory because they are performed with material bodies. They think material bodies belonged to them in the past and now they have renounced them. Actually, their material bodies never belonged to them, but to Kṛṣṇa, having been created by Him.

Unlike the impersonalist, the devotee knows full well who owns his assets or qualities. Therefore he engages them in Kṛṣṇa's service for the benefit of their true owner. That is the spirit of Vaiṣṇava renunciation.

The fleeting nature of the material world is meant to awaken us to look for the eternal, for the Absolute Truth. Sooner or later, people come to feel life in the material world to be empty because of its temporary nature, as did the teenage girl and the film director. She chose to see the material world as all in all, forgetting about God. The basic feeling was emptiness, as Kṛṣṇa was missing, and she was constantly trying to give a fresh and new taste to the superficial. But a drop of water in the desert cannot quench a person's thirst. So she was desperately looking for another drop and another drop and another drop.

The film director accepts hopelessness and frustration as our natural state. Happiness in this world is not the ocean of water we need, but rather a mirage. Still, the illusion of a mirage exists because of the reality of water. Similarly, this world is a reflection of the spiritual world, but it can tell us something about the original. We are meant not for hopelessness and frustration, but for the original happiness in the spiritual world.

When this man descends into hopelessness, he does not see that everything has a purpose. He sees things in this world as disconnected from God, when in fact nothing can exist without Him. Because of his futile attempts to enjoy in separation from Kṛṣṇa, he meets frustration and concludes that life is pitiful. When a small child comes across a stock of light bulbs, he doesn't know their purpose; he thinks they're playthings. But because they're not really playthings, he soon feels frustrated and discards them. He won't discard his playful propensity, however, and will move on to something else. Similarly, the film director wants to reject material things, but he can't live without them. And the impersonalists may reject the world as false, but he continues to return to material activities. Why? Because as persons, we always have to act. If we are unable to act spiritually, we will automatically act materially.

Impersonalism blocks realization of the blissful aspect of our original nature.

Impelled by Our Natures

Our acquired nature dictates the specific way in which we are to act and work. In *Bhagavad-gītā,* Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he is a warrior and should not think of adopting another occupation; his nature always will impel him to fight. But he should fight not for himself but for Kṛṣṇa. Although these two activities seem identical, and one may think the war Arjuna fought at Kurukshetra was for his own glory, there is a gulf of difference in consciousness. Arjuna fought to fulfill the purpose of the Lord.

Impersonalism blocks realization of the blissful aspect of our original nature. That is why the film director—a sort of *jñānī* looking for what is beyond the grasp of the senses, the unmanifested without form—ends up in despondency and confusion. His goal in life is unclear. And he lacks the internal strength to really carry on with a purpose, as he is without motivation and dedication.

Kṛṣṇa explains in *Bhagavad-gītā* (12.5), "For those whose minds are attached to the unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme, advancement is very troublesome. To make progress in that discipline is always difficult for those who are embodied."

The film director seemed a gifted and intelligent person to me, aware of the developed consciousness of the human form. But our abilities should not separate us from Kṛṣṇa, but bring us closer. A warrior will always tend to fight and protect. A film director's imagination will always drive him to expression. While using our natural tendencies, we should be grateful to the Lord for their gift. We can use them to satisfy Him. Though temporary, our abilities find their true purpose in service to Kṛṣṇa.

A devotee's goal in life is serving Kṛṣṇa, and therefore he wants Kṛṣṇa's name and glories to be spread everywhere. A devotee finds real strength and motivation when he remembers that everything he does is for Kṛṣṇa.

By using our abilities in Kṛṣṇa's service, the film of our life will be a happy one. Like a person in the desert who finally finds water, we will turn from pitiable to grateful. We will turn from the frustration of living in a false world, to the enthusiasm of living with love and determination. We will have faith in the meaning of our activities. And ultimate salvation will follow, as all these bring about devotion to the Supreme Lord.

Epilogue

A year after reading those magazine interviews, I was walking down the street when an advertisement for a new film by the frustrated director drew my attention. The title of the film was *Gadgets.* I was intrigued, and I approached a man standing next to the advertisement distributing flyers. The flyer included a new interview with the film director, this time on his latest film. He said the title was inspired by his daughter's gadget-addiction. It's her story. He mentioned his daughter's name, and I realized she was the same teenage girl interviewed, separately from her father, in last year's magazine.

The film portrays how one day she felt fed up with her dependence on gadgets and started to find her life useless.

"Up to this point, I could perfectly understand her," her father said.

But what shocked him and provided him with the inspiration to make this new film was his daughter's leaving home.

"Although she and I had come to the same conclusion, she couldn't live with it, as I had," he mused.

The girl decided to search the world for an answer to her questions: What is the purpose of this world? What is the meaning of life? She prayed to God to reveal the real way for her to live, or to end her useless existence by somehow meeting death on her journey.

I feel in my heart that she will certainly find the way. Such determination to find the Absolute Truth and not waste her life can only lead her to Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa Rāginī Devī Dāsī joined ISKCON in Romania in 1991. She serves with the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, translating Śrīla Prabhupāda's books into Romanian.

CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Māyāpur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to www.krishna.com/calendar.

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

Month of Dāmodara

(October 8–November 5)

NOVEMBER

2—Trispṛṣā Mahā-dvādaśi. Fasting from grains and beans for Utthānā Ekādaśī. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gaurakiśora Dāsa Bābājī, the spiritual master of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who was Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master. Fasting till noon.

5—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Rāsa-yātrā. Last day of Dāmodara-vrata and Cāturmāsya.

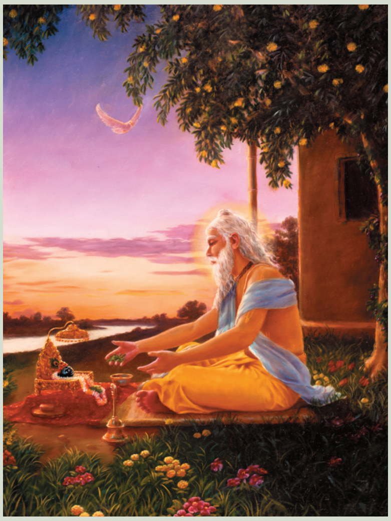
Month of Keśava

(November 6–December 4)

16—Utpannā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

DECEMBER

1—Mokṣadā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Also, the anniversary of the day on which Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā.*



Painting by Muralidhara Dāsa

Śrī Advaita Ācārya

Month of Nārāyaṇa

(December 5–January 3)

8—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the spiritual master of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

16—Saphalā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

21—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

23—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

30—Putradā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

Month of Mādhava

(January 4–February 2)

JANUARY

8—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

9—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī, a great spiritual master and author of *Gīta-govinda.*

15—Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

23—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Disappeaance anniversary of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, a Vaiṣṇava spiritual master and author who appeared in the seventeenth century. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī, the consort of Lord Caitanya

25—Appearance anniversary of Śrī Advaita Ācārya, an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's expansion Mahā-Viṣṇu and a close associate of Lord Caitanya. Fasting till noon.

27—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīpāda Madhavācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the thirteenth century.

28—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, an eleventh-century philosopher and spiritual master.

29—Bhaimī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Fasting till noon for the appearance of Lord Varāha.

30—Appearance of Lord Varāha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's boar incarnation. (No fasting.)

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BETTING ON GOD

Pascal's Wager and the Spoils of Faith

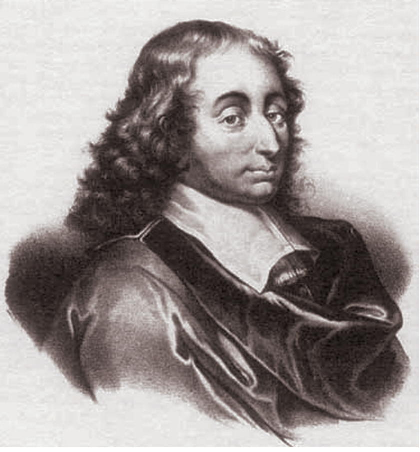
Scientific discoveries are convincing intelligent people that betting on the existence of God is a reasonable gamble.

by Satyarāja Dāsa

I READ A RECENT statistic that was mind-boggling: According to a series of Gallup surveys, ninety-four percent of Americans believe in God, and ninety percent pray. Why, I wondered, in our modern age of science, do so many people still believe? This is a time when things not empirically proven are left by the wayside. Of course, a good number of believers have simple faith, and that's that. But there is also a burgeoning scientific community offering impetus for statistics like those above.

I happened upon the work of Patrick Glynn, a Harvard scholar, currently the associate director of the George Washington University Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. He promotes the Anthropic Principle, which originated in the 1970s as the brainchild of Cambridge astrophysicists and cosmologists, including Brandon Carter, a colleague of people like Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose. Glynn, however, made the theory popular through his book *God: The Evidence*.

Basically, the Anthropic Principle posits that "what we expect to observe in the universe must be restricted by the conditions necessary for our presence as observers." In other words, all the seemingly arbitrary and unrelated constants in physics have one strange thing in common: these are precisely the values you need if you want to have life in the universe. Moreover, the myriad laws of physics seem to have been fine-tuned from the very beginning of the universe for the existence of human beings.



Blaise Pascal

According to Glynn, more and more scientists are subscribing to the Anthropic Principle, which heavily implies an ordered universe and a supreme controller, i.e., God. Because of this, Glynn tells us, "Pascal's Wager" is starting to really make sense.

"Who's what?" I asked myself.

I promptly went on-line to find out exactly what Pascal's Wager is all about.

The seventeenth-century mathematician/philosopher Blaise Pascal formulated a pragmatic argument for justifying belief in God. Which is worth the risk of error, Pascal questioned, belief or non-belief? It is wise, he said, to "wager" on the existence of God, for the alternative, to put one's faith in faithlessness, is an inferior bet. And, more, if one believes in God but is eventually proven wrong, one loses nothing. But if one believes and is proven right, one gains just about everything. And what if one disbelieves in God and is proven wrong? What if one lives an atheistic life and then finds out there is a God? That's going to be trouble for sure.

Most philosophers think Pascal's Wager is the weakest of all the traditional arguments for believing in the existence of God. But Pascal thought it was the strongest. After completing his construction of the full argument in his work *Pensees*, he wrote, "This is conclusive, and if men are capable of any truth, this is it." This declaration was a rare moment of certainty for Pascal, one of the most skeptical thinkers of the modern era.

But here's how he saw it: Suppose a loved one is dying. You've tried everything, and all the specialists agree that there is no hope.

Photographer: Douglas Freer / Agency: Dreamstime.com. Montage: Yamarāja Dāsa

Then a doctor comes along and offers a new “miracle drug.” He says there’s a 50-50 chance it can save your loved one’s life. Would it be reasonable to try it, even if there were some expense? And what if it were free? Couldn’t one conclude that it is entirely reasonable to try it and unreasonable not to?

Here’s another analogy: Suppose you’re at work and you hear a report that your house is on fire and your children inside. You don’t know whether the report is true or false. What is the reasonable thing to do? Do you ignore the report, or do you take the time to check it out, either by going home or by phoning in?

PASCAL’S WAGER

BELIEF	CONDUCT	RESULT
God exists	Righteous	IF: No God — THEN: No loss IF: God exists — THEN: Highest gain
God doesn’t exist	Sinful	IF: No God — THEN: Temporary gain IF: God exists — THEN: Greatest loss

“No reasonable person,” wrote Pascal, “will be in doubt in such cases. Deciding whether to believe in God is a case like these. . . . It is therefore the height of folly not to ‘bet’ on God, even if you have no certainty, no proof, no guarantee that your bet will win.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed with Pascal on this point. In *Dialectic Spiritualism: A Vedic View of Western Philosophy*, a series of dialogs between Prabhupāda and some of his disciples, he is apprised of Pascal’s Wager. Here is the substance of the exchange:

> **Disciple:** Pascal claims that by faith we have to make a forced option, or what he calls a religious wager. We either have to cast our lot on the side of God—in which case we have nothing to lose in this life and everything to gain in the next—or we deny God and jeopardize our eternal position.
>
> **Prabhupāda:** That is our argument. If there are two people, and neither has experience of God, one may say that there is no God, and the other may say that there is God. So both must be given a chance. The one who says there is no God dismisses the whole case, but the one who says there is a God must become cautious. He cannot work irresponsibly. If there is a God, he cannot run risks. Actually, both are taking risks because neither knows for certain that there is a God. However, it is preferable that one believe.
>
> **Disciple:** Pascal says there is a fifty-fifty chance.
>
> **Prabhupāda:** Yes, so take the fifty percent chance in favor.
>
> **Disciple:** Pascal also advocated that. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain.
>
> **Prabhupāda:** Yes. We also advise people to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Since you have nothing to lose and everything to gain, why not chant?

Of course, Pascal’s Wager is not the best way to approach God. Obviously, if one has an inborn appreciation for God and serves Him out of natural love and devotion, that’s best. If not, one should develop the sense of loving God by following the recommendations of one who does love God, along with the advice given by the scriptures and the sages. But, as the *Bhagavad-gītā* (Chapter 12) tells us, people are rarely spontaneous lovers of God. Second best, says Lord Kṛṣṇa, is to fix one’s mind on God. And if one can’t do that, then one should follow the regulative principles of an established religious path. This would be Pascal’s advice, too. In this way, the *Gītā* offers many options for those of us not born with a natural or innate love of God.

To understand Pascal’s Wager, it helps to understand its background. Pascal lived in a time of great skepticism. He was a Christian apologist looking for a way to explain God to skeptical peers. He saw faith and reason as two ladders to the Divine. What remaining options were there for those bereft of these ladders?

“Could there be a third ladder,” he questioned, “out of the pit of unbelief and into the light of belief?”

Pascal’s Wager claims to be that third ladder. Pascal was well aware that it was a low ladder.

“If your belief in God emerges as a bet,” he wrote, “that is certainly not a deep, mature, or adequate faith. But it is something, it is a start, it is enough to dam the tide of atheism.”

The Wager appeals not to a high ideal, like higher echelons of faith, hope, love, or even proof, but to a low one: the instinct for self-preservation, the desire to be happy and not unhappy. Bet on God and you’ll be happy; don’t, and you won’t. That’s what it amounts to.

Counterarguments

Of course, atheistic philosophers are naturally critical of Pascal’s

Wager. The first problem, they say, is that the Wager implies the necessity of making a choice. But in fact, say Pascal's critics, we don't really have to. We can just adhere to the principle of agnosticism and admit that we don't really know if God exists or not. We can live our days with this lack of certainty. Period.

But on the battlefield of life, one simply must choose to go one way or the other. Consider Arjuna, the hero of the *Bhagavad-gītā.* At the onset of a civil war, right there on the battlefield he said, "I'm not going to fight." Like Arjuna, we sometimes pretend there is no battle, that we can live our lives without answering to one course of action or another, that we can live our lives without consequence. Clearly, this sort of denial is not advantageous. In Arjuna's case, armies were arrayed, waiting for battle. He had to choose. Pascal says we must bet for God or against Him, and this bet will determine exactly how we live our life, for better or for worse. One can be a good person without God, says Pascal, but it is far less likely.

Another problem put forward by critics of Pascal's Wager is that it focuses on accepting the God of Christianity, along with His rules as given through the biblical tradition. But why, they wonder, should the wager be that narrow? What if I bet on the Christian conception of God but that conception turns out to be wrong? What if God is someone else, with a whole other set of rules?

The fact is that God Himself may be unknowable in all His fullness, but His laws are certainly within our range of knowledge. Moral law and, higher, spiritual law are no secret to humanity. Despite what some may think, God's commandments vary little from religion to religion. *Sanātana-dharma,* or the eternal function of the soul, is a thread that connects the mystical essence of religion. And the science of God focuses in on that. Kṛṣṇa consciousness teaches that betting on God is the prerogative of the human form of life. Pascal's Wager—even if only a fifty-fifty chance that God exists—is a wise choice.

God Is a Safe Bet

If God does not exist, it doesn't matter how you wager, for there is nothing to win after death and nothing to lose as well. But if God does exist, your only chance of winning eternal happiness is to believe—and to act on that belief—and your only chance of losing it is to refuse to believe.

But is it worth the price? This is the real question. What must be given up to wager that God exists? Let us remind ourselves that whatever we give up is only finite, and, as Pascal would say, it is most reasonable to wager something finite on the chance of winning something infinite. That's what the theistic enterprise is all about. Even if you have to give up certain deep-rooted habits or pleasures to wager on God, doesn't the possibility of a higher happiness make it worth it in the end? Patrick Glynn, mentioned earlier, deals with this at some length:

> Of course, the touchy issue here concerns what those who opt for belief must sacrifice in this life: Revelation teaches that they must, in Pascal's words, "curtail" their "passions." Pascal tried to minimize this sacrifice by pointing to the purely rational benefits of a life lived in conformity with the moral law. "Now, what harm will you come by," he wrote, "in making this choice? You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, generous, a sincere friend, truthful. Certainly, you will not enjoy those pernicious delights—glory and luxury; but will you not experience others?" The atheist and agnostic position has always been that Pascal had soft-pedaled the sacrifice end of the bargain. In giving up the pleasures and glories that religion teaches us to forgo, so the atheist argument has run, we are indeed sacrificing much. But modern research in psychology makes clear that the morally unrestrained life is not worth living. The crowning irony is this: Even if their beliefs were to be proved illusions, religiously committed people lead happier and healthier lives, as numerous studies show.
>
> But the larger point to recognize is that the modern secular psychological paradigm—the effort to give a complete account of the workings of the human mind without reference to God or spirit—has crumbled. Modernity failed to achieve its ambition of a comprehensive, materialistic alternative to the religious understanding of the human condition. A purely secular view of human mental life has been shown to fail not just at the theoretical, but also at the practical, level. The last thing that Freud would have predicted as the outcome of more than a half century's scientific psychological research and therapeutic experience was the rediscovery of the soul.

A God-conscious life has much to offer, with spiritual bliss superseding any and all hardships.

A God-conscious life has much to offer, with spiritual bliss superseding any and all hardships. Sure, devotees rise early, commit to regulated chanting, and follow certain restrictive principles, like no meat-eating, no intoxication, no illicit sex, and no gambling. But these

(*please turn to page 54*)

Lord Kūrma
And the Battle for Ambrosia

The Supreme Lord once assumed the form of a gigantic tortoise and had His back scratched with a mountain.

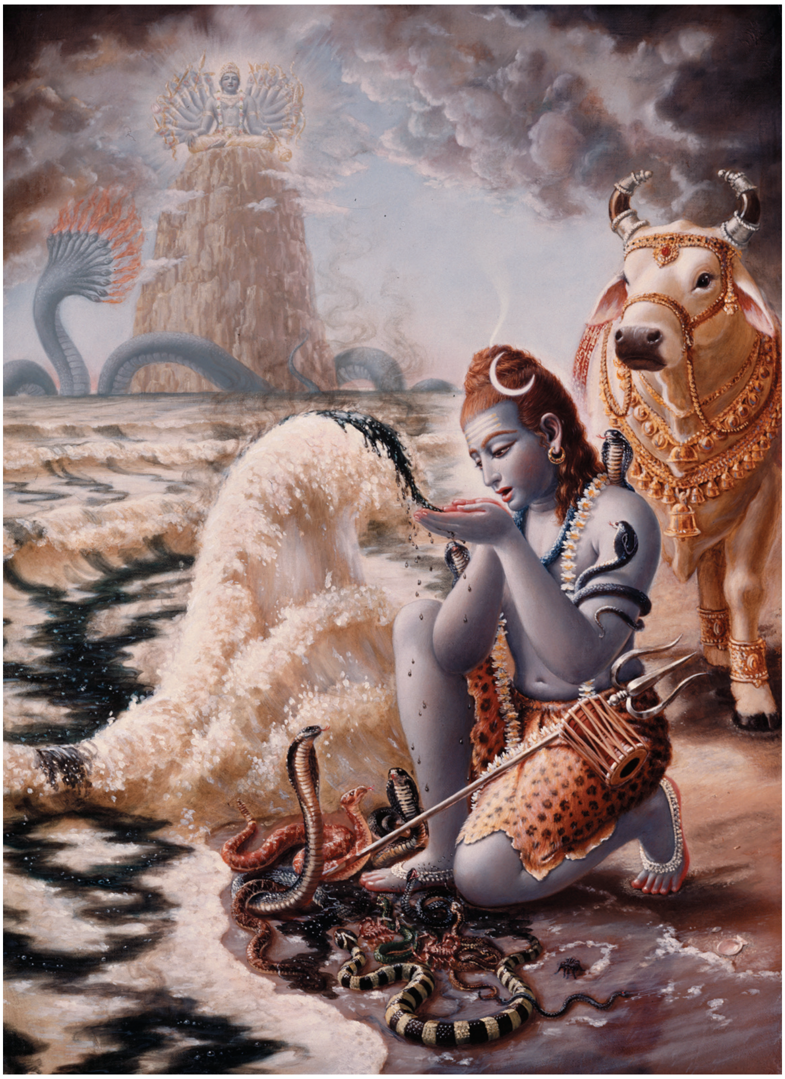
by Aja Govinda Dāsa

WHY DID THE Supreme Personality of Godhead assume the form of a turtle? Why did He have to protect the *suras,* the godly administrators of the universe, by cheating the *asuras,* the rebellious enemies of the *suras*? How is it that the *suras* became so weak that they had to compromise with their enemies? We find our answers in the *Śrmad-Bhāgavatam.*

Indra's Pride

The sage Durvāsā once graciously offered Indra, king of the *suras,* a fragrant garland from his own neck. Indra, however, conceited with his majestic opulence, disregarded the gift and tossed it onto his elephant's trunk. The elephant couldn't care less for a garland, and he smashed it on the ground with his feet. Thus Indra's material opulence, a catalyst for his pride, led to his offense against a great personality. Angry Durvāsā then cursed Indra to become poverty-stricken.

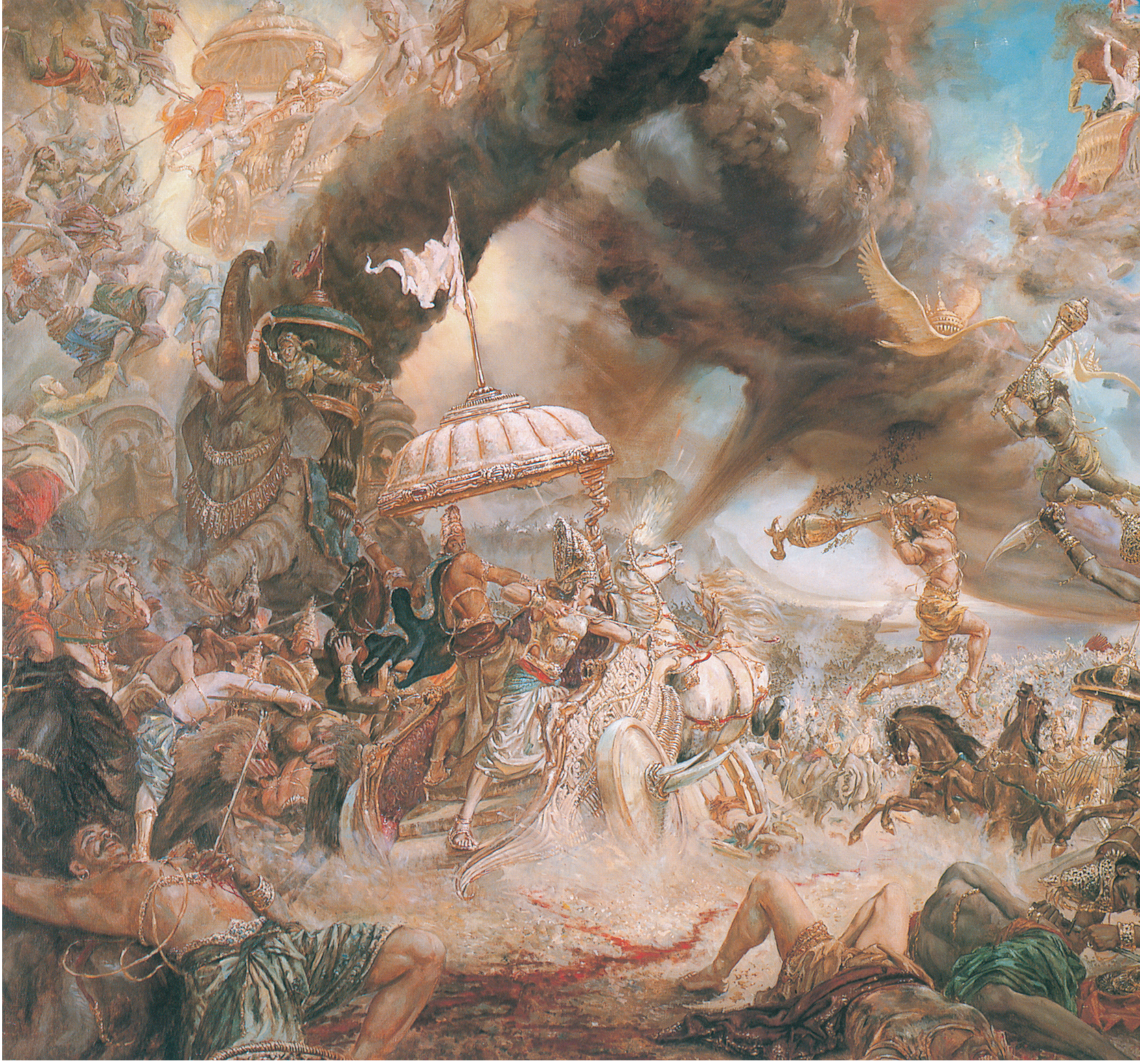
As a result of the curse, *asuras* besieged Indra and the *suras* with powerful weapons. Although the *suras* are sometimes bewildered by their material opulence, they are nonetheless devotees of the Supreme Lord and surrender to Him in difficulty.



Lord Kūrma supports Mandara Mountain (left), which the suras *and* asuras *use to churn the milk ocean. At right, Lord Śiva drinks the poison that was the first product of the churning.*

Painting by Parīkṣit Dāsa

Painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa



Painting by Jñānañjana Dāsa

Thus the routed *suras* proceeded to the bank of the milk ocean, where they offered prayers to Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord. Satisfied by their prayers, Lord Viṣṇu appeared in person before the *suras,* who fell prostrate to offer their homage to Him. The Lord's hue is azure like the blue sapphire, His eyes crimson like a lotus. He is bedecked in garments shining like molten gold, and His brilliance defeats the effulgence of millions of suns. In a deep voice reverberating like thunder, the omniscient Lord instructed the *suras* to make a truce with the *asuras,* who were currently more powerful, having been blessed by their teacher Śukrācārya.

Divine Diplomacy

The Lord instructed the *suras* to act according to the lesson learned from the anecdote of the snake and the mouse. In this story, a snake and a mouse were caught in a basket. The cunning snake knew that he couldn't escape the basket without the help of the mouse. So he told his prey, "O my dear friend, if you kindly chew a hole in this basket, then we can both get out." The snake intended to first let the mouse create a hole, then to feast on the mouse, and then to exit freely. Similarly, the Lord directed the *suras* to collaborate with the *asuras* in churning the milk ocean to extract the nectar of immortality, and He promised to deprive the atheistic *asuras* of their share of ambrosia.

Churning the Milk Ocean

The Lord placed all the *asuras* and *suras,* along with a large mountain, on the back of His eagle-carrier, Garuḍa, and brought them to the milk ocean. A huge snake was coiled around the mountain to be used as the churning rope. The churning of the ocean commenced, but as the two groups were rotating the mountain with the snake rope, the mountain started plummeting into the great ocean. Seeing the *suras* and *asuras* disappointed, Lord Viṣṇu, possessor of infallible determination, entered the milk ocean, assumed the form of an enormous tortoise, and lifted the great mountain on His back. Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī, a great eleventh-century Vaiṣṇava poet, glorifies this incarnation—Śrī Kūrmadeva—as follows:

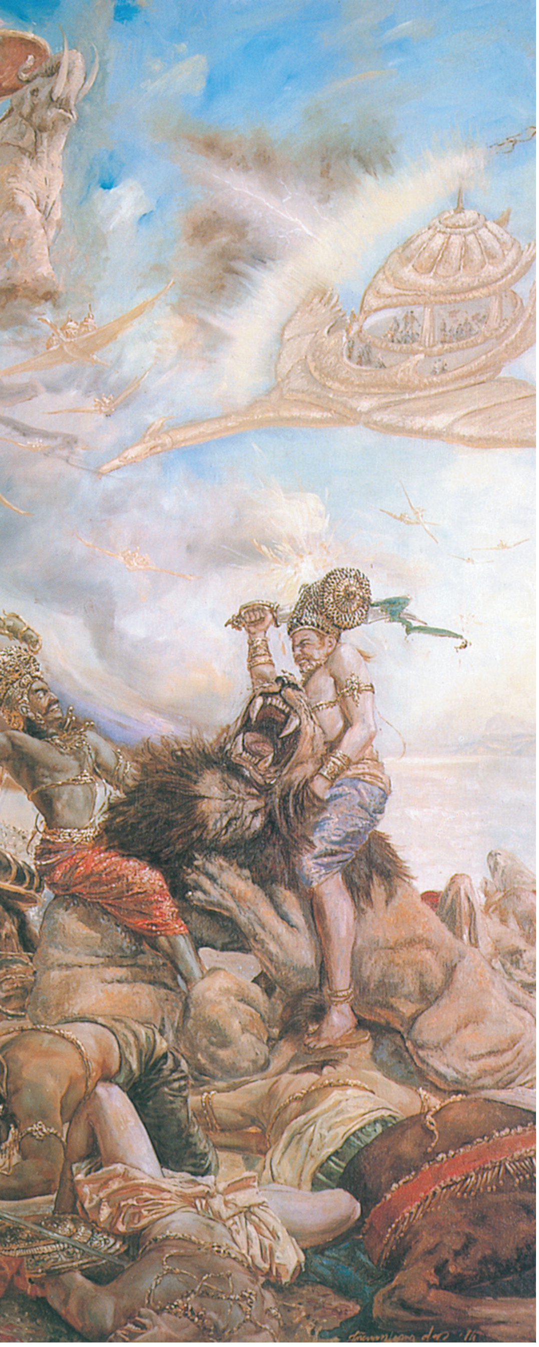
kṣitir iha vipulatare tiṣṭhati tava
pṛṣṭhe
dharaṇi-dhāraṇa-kiṇa-cakra-
gariṣṭhe
keśava dhṛta-kūrma-śarīra jaya
jagadīśa hare

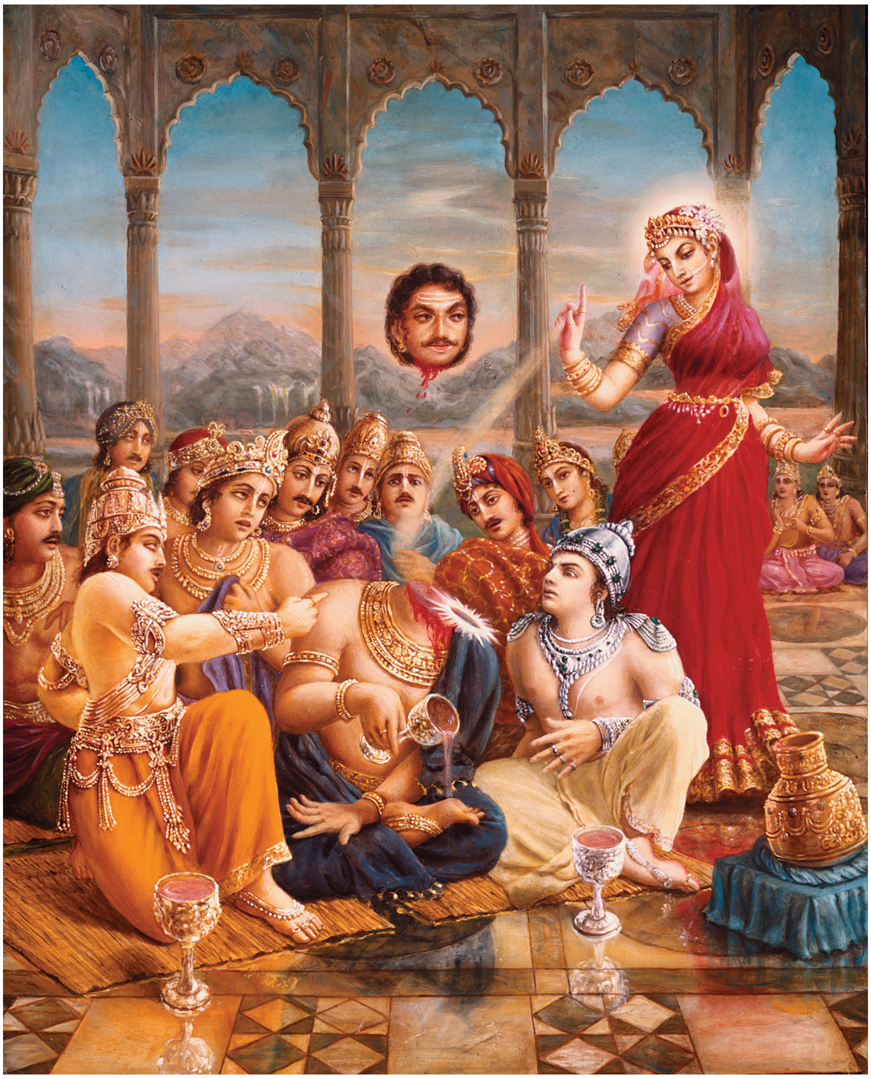
"O Keśava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of a tortoise! All glories to You! In this incarnation as a divine tortoise the great Mandara Mountain rests upon Your gigantic back as a pivot for churning the ocean of milk. From holding up the huge mountain a large scarlike depression is put in Your back, which has become most glorious."

The holder of infinite universes felt no burden from the weight of the mountain; rather, the rotation of the mountain provided a pleasing scratching sensation for His back. The Lord can manifest in any species, and in this particular pastime, He appeared as a turtle because He wanted to enjoy lifting a mountain on His rigid back.

The churning of the ocean at first produced a lethal poison that spread throughout the universe, threatening to kill all life. Although the Supreme Lord could rectify the situation, He wanted to glorify His dear devotee Lord Śiva,

(*please turn to page 58*)





Painting by Yadurānī Devī Dāsī

The suras *and* asuras *(above) battle for the nectar of immortality produced from the churning of the milk ocean. At right, Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation as Mohinī-mūrti beheads the* asura *Rāhu, who had disguised himself as a* sura *to get a share of the ambrosia.*

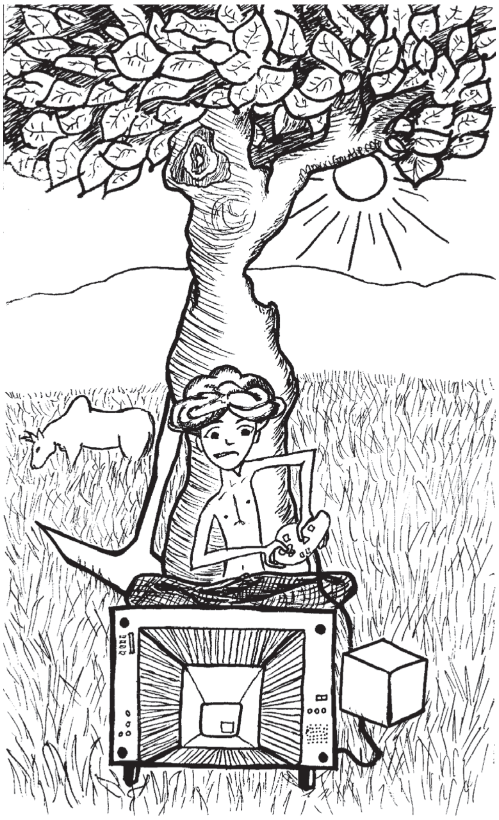
THE VEDIC OBSERVER

Transcendental Commentary on the Issues of the Day

Photographer: Susan Quinland-Stringer / Agency: Dreamstime.com. Drawings by Manjari Gauthier.

Opening Our Eyes to Progress

by Kṛṣṇa Dharma Dāsa



RECENTLY Prince Charles, an avid advocate of organic farming, took his holistic message to India. On a visit to the Punjab he promoted his own New Food Foundation and inaugurated its Indian equivalent, the Bhumi Vardaan Foundation. Brightly garlanded with marigolds, and to the accompaniment of a cacophony of assorted instruments, he strolled about in the hot Punjabi sunshine sharing his thoughts on agriculture with local organic farmers.

Some might see a certain irony here. India has always been a mainly agrarian economy, with some seventy percent of its people still involved in producing food. A journey through the hinterlands of the great subcontinent will reveal many a peaceful scene of simple villagers working the fields with their draft animals and their bare hands. Farming methods employed for millennia are in evidence throughout the land.

Sadly, times are changing. The last few decades have seen India's leaders increasingly embracing the methods and machinery of the West. From mobile phones to combined harvesters to smoke belching factories, the benediction of modern technology is rapidly sweeping the country.

Naturally this is viewed as progress. India is coming online with the developed world, and global companies are falling over themselves to get a slice of this huge new market. Even President Bush visited India to forge a "historic agreement" on trade and defense. During his trip he remarked, "Our [India and the US] relationship has never been better. We will work together. There is no limit to what we can achieve."

It is perhaps strange then that the future monarch of Britain, which after all instigated the industrial revolution now enveloping India, should visit that country to encourage more traditional practices. Of course, Prince Charles has never really been in step with the establishment, with his views on farming and indeed spirituality. His is a powerful voice that often resonates with the "simple living, high thinking" message of the *Vedas,* but it seems he may be shouting into the wind in India today, as the wheels of technological advancement roll inexorably onward.

But is this really advancement? The desired objective is of course economic growth—more wealth and resources for all. Vedic wisdom, however, holds that such growth and opulence comes from God, from our following His directions and working within the framework of natural laws He has created. By flouting these laws and going all out for material gain, we ultimately bring about nothing but suffering. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.8.40):

> Human prosperity flourishes by natural gifts and not by gigantic industrial enterprises. The gigantic industrial enterprises are products of a godless civilization, and they cause the destruction of the noble aims of human life. The more we go on increasing such troublesome industries to squeeze out the vital energy of the human being, the more there will be unrest and dissatisfaction of the people in general, although a few only can live lavishly by exploitation. The natural gifts such as grains and vegetables, fruits, rivers, the hills of jewels and minerals, and the seas full of pearls are supplied by the order of the Supreme, and as He desires, material nature produces them in abundance or restricts them at times.

With just a little thought we can see how this is true. Despite whatever technologies we may develop, if there is drought and famine we are in serious trouble and can only pray. No factory will ever be able to produce food or water, nor indeed cotton, silk, metals, minerals, jewels, or any other natural resource we require or desire.

Atheistic technology simply creates an illusion of progress. Sure, there are greater immediate gains, but in the long term the results are catastrophic, as we are now beginning to see. It is simply not sustainable, as Prince Charles is rightly pointing out. Of all places, India—home of the *Bhagavad-gītā*—should be most aware of this truth. The *Gītā* makes it clear that only by divine sacrifice and worship of the Lord can we ever be happy. The *Gītā's* greatest ambassador, Śrīla Prabhupāda, came from India to bring this message to the West, and as a result we are starting to come to our senses. How sad then to see India moving in the opposite direction.

When Prabhupāda came to the West, he used a metaphor to describe his mission: The West is the blind man and India the lame but sighted man. If the blind man carries the lame man, then both can make progress. Things have moved on, and the lame man is fast becoming strong, but let's hope that in the process he does not lose his vision. Let's pray that both East and West open their eyes to Kṛṣṇa's messages in the *Gītā.* Then, as President Bush suggested, there really will be "no limit to what we can achieve."

Kṛṣṇa Dharma Dāsa lives in Manchester, England. He has written retellings of the Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa, *and* Pañca Tantra.

In the Name of Religion

by Pañca Tattva Dāsa

A RECENTLY released transcript of cockpit voice recordings from United Airlines Flight 93, the third plane involved in the infamous terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, contains repeated cries of "God is great!" in Arabic right up to the moment of its impact in a field in Pennsylvania.

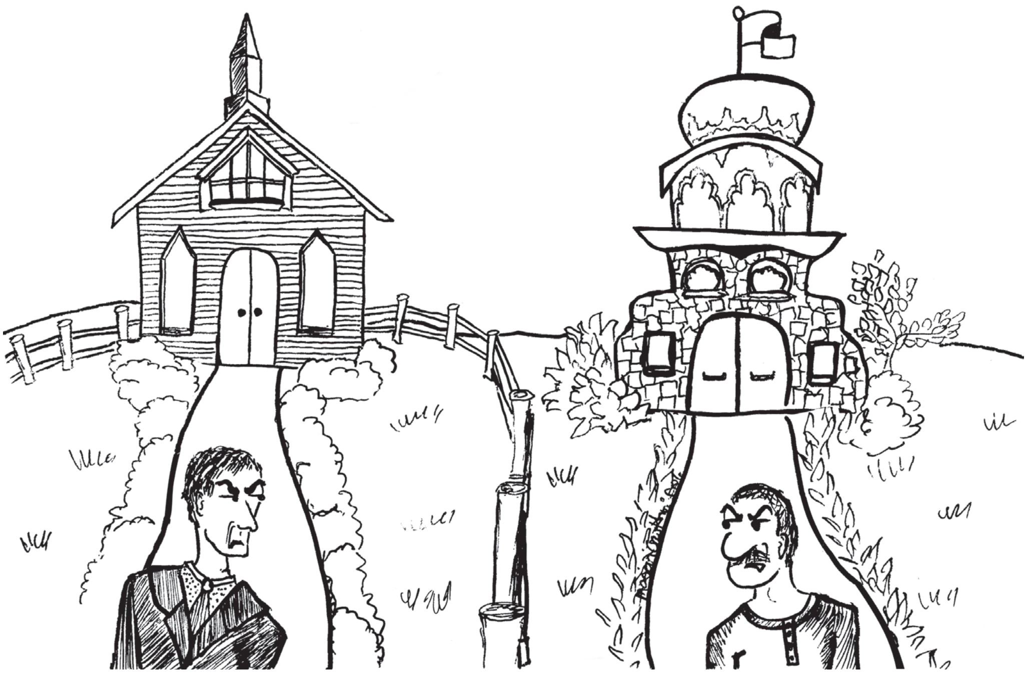
As horrible as the September 11 attacks were, Islamic extremists do not have a monopoly on contemporary acts of murder and mayhem. Bombings, executions, and mutilations in Northern Ireland by paramilitary fighters claiming to be Roman Catholic or Protestant were commonplace until recently. Not long ago, communal violence between Muslims and Hindus claimed over a thousand lives in Gujarat, India.

With these incidents happening all around us, one might conclude that religious faith itself is the main catalyst for violent behavior. In reality, most of the violent deaths in the twentieth century are attributed not to religious fanaticism but to ruthless political ambition and ethnic hatred: 15 million deaths during World War One, 50 million deaths in Word War Two, 9 million casualties from the Russian Civil War, 20 million dead in the former Soviet Union during Stalin's "collectivization" programs, over 2 million Koreans killed during the Korean War, an estimated 3 to 4 million Vietnamese deaths during the Vietnam War, the killing of millions of Cambodians by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, 700 thousand Tutsis murdered by their Hutu neighbors in Rwanda, Africa, in a mere 100 days.

Even though these numbers dwarf the casualty counts from today's religious conflicts, religion still too often becomes a flashpoint for world strife. Why does such an antagonistic spirit exist between members of different religions? What does this say about the religions themselves?

In the Seventeenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā,* Lord Kṛṣṇa says that our faith is affected by the material modes of nature we have come in contact with: goodness, passion, and ignorance. In his commentary on the third verse of the chapter, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

> Everyone has a particular type of faith, regardless of what he is. But his faith is considered good, passionate, or ignorant according to the nature he has acquired. Thus, according to his particular type of faith, one associates with certain persons. . . .
>
> It should be understood that if one's heart



> is in the mode of goodness his faith is also in the mode of goodness. If his heart is in the mode of passion, his faith is also in the mode of passion. And if his heart is in the mode of darkness, illusion, his faith is also thus contaminated. Thus we find different types of faith in this world, and there are different types of religions due to different types of faith. The real principle of religious faith is situated in the mode of pure goodness, but because the heart is tainted we find different types of religious principles. Thus according to different types of faith, there are different kinds of worship.

So we are attracted to a particular type of religion in part because of our material conditioning. If we are in the mode of passion, characterized by boundless material desires, we will seek out a religion that encourages us without any cautions to avidly pursue our goals of making money and enjoying our senses. Embittered by the dominance of a rival political party or religious group over our affairs, we may look for a religious organization that empathizes with our frustration, tells us that God is on our side, and promises success in our struggle with rivals. If we are dominated by the mode of ignorance, we will gravitate toward a religion that indulges our infatuation with intoxication, indolence, and madness.

Even a religion that once provided guidance in the mode of goodness for its followers can be undermined over time by influence from the lower modes of nature. Someone with a materialistic agenda can comb through a religious scripture to find justification, however strained, implausible, or out of context, for his or her position. Religious leaders may compromise their religion to attract followers, acquire wealth, or defeat perceived enemies. Eventually, the original values of the religion become obscured. If Lord Jesus Christ were to appear on earth today, how would he regard the sometimes lethal infighting of those who claim to be his followers? If the Prophet Mohammed were to arrive on the scene, what would he think of suicide bombers?

Religion in the mode of pure goodness, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is not the sectarian tool of a political party or a social cause. Its practice is not meant for obtaining fame or fortune. A faithful person on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness does not approach the Supreme Lord with material motives. He sees all living beings as spiritually equal in quality, and regards the outward covering of the material body, along with its many designations (plant, animal, man, woman, rich, poor, Hindu, Muslim, Christian) as temporary and insignificant. Because of his spiritual vision, he does not categorize one man as a friend because he follows his religion, and another man as an enemy because his religion is different. Instead, he sees everyone as a servant of Kṛṣṇa in various stages of remembrance or forgetfulness of that position, and he endeavors to increase remembrance of Kṛṣṇa in his own life and the lives of others.

He cries out the name of God, but not while cruelly taking lives by hijacking an airplane and crashing it into a skyscraper. Instead, he humbly goes out on the public square, sweetly singing the holy names of the Lord, especially the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—so that love of God will gradually awaken in the hearts of all who hear. Whether people appreciate him or ridicule him is of no consequence; his only concern is that they be spiritually benefited, and he is willing to tolerate all kinds of adversity on their behalf. When such religious faith prevails in the world, there will be no more terrorist acts in the name of religion. ❁

Pañca Tattva Dāsa joined ISKCON in 1978. He lives with his wife and daughter in Alachua, Florida.

THE TASTIEST SPICE

(*continued from page 15*)

material conditioning, is to love Kṛṣṇa. But due to our being infected by the modes of material nature, this loving propensity for the Supreme Lord has been downgraded to lust for temporary material things. Love means to give unconditionally to satisfy the Lord. Lust means to take things to satisfy our own material senses.

Even though Kṛṣṇa presents the accessible path of *bhakti-yoga* to Arjuna, many people will find it difficult to always think of Kṛṣṇa. For this reason Kṛṣṇa appeared as Lord Caitanya five hundred years ago and made the process of *bhakti* even more accessible in this fallen age of quarrel and hypocrisy. He introduced the simple and sublime process of chanting the Lord's holy names as the means to transform our lust back into love.

Even a small child can make spiritual progress by singing or saying the Lord's names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. By chanting these names of God as often as we can, we will be able to think of Kṛṣṇa and become His devotee. This is the goal of our human life.

Who would have thought that my husband's overly sweetened pizza *prasādam* would have inspired such pleasant thoughts? *Prasādam* means "mercy," and mercy often comes in unpredictable forms. Sometimes it may not seem delectable, but we can savor it nonetheless, just as the Lord may savor banana peels if the spice is love. ❁

Arcana Siddhī Devī Dāsī was initiated by Prabhupāda in 1976. She lives with her husband and son in Sandy Ridge, North Carolina, where she works as a family therapist.

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

The Eyes to See God

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place in December of 1973, during a morning walk at Venice Beach, Los Angeles.

Disciple: The scientists say their power of reason tells them there's no God. They say if you believe in God it's strictly a matter of faith.

Śrīla Prabhupāda It is not a matter of faith—it is fact.

Disciple: When scientists say "fact," they mean something they can perceive through their senses.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Yes, and in Kṛṣṇa consciousness we can perceive God through our senses. The more we engage our senses in devotional service—service to God—the more we are able to perceive Him. *Hṛṣīkeṇa hṛṣīkeśa-sevanaṁ bhaktir ucyate:* "When one engages his senses in service to the Supreme, that relationship is called *bhakti* [devotion]." For example, we use our legs to walk to the temple, and our tongue to glorify God and eat *prasādam.*

Disciple: But the scientists say these are acts of faith. They say that when we offer food to God, it's only our faith that makes us think God accepts it. They say they can't see Him eating.

Śrīla Prabhupāda They cannot see, but I can see. I am not a fool like them. They are spiritually blind—suffering from cataracts, ignorance. If they come to me, I shall operate, and then they'll see God also.

Disciple: Well, the scientists want to see God now.

Śrīla Prabhupāda But Kṛṣṇa will not reveal Himself to them now, because they're rascals—big animals. *Śva-viḍ-varāhoṣṭra-kharaiḥ saṁstutaḥ puruṣaḥ paśuḥ:* "Anyone who's not a devotee of God is just a big animal—a big camel or a big dog or a big swine—and the people who praise him are the same."

Disciple: They say we're just dreamers—that we make up fantasies about God and the spiritual world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Why do they say "fantasies"? They have no brain to understand, so they say "fantasies."

Disciple: Well, their standard of objectivity is what they can perceive through their senses.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Yes, they can perceive God through their senses. When they perceive sand through their senses, who do they think made the sand? They didn't. When they perceive the ocean through their senses, who do they think made that? Why are they such fools that they don't understand this?

Disciple: They say that if God made these things, they'd be able to see Him, just as they can see the ocean.

Śrīla Prabhupāda And I say to them, "Yes, you can see God—but first you have to have the eyes. You are blind; you have cataracts. Come to me and I will operate. Then you'll see

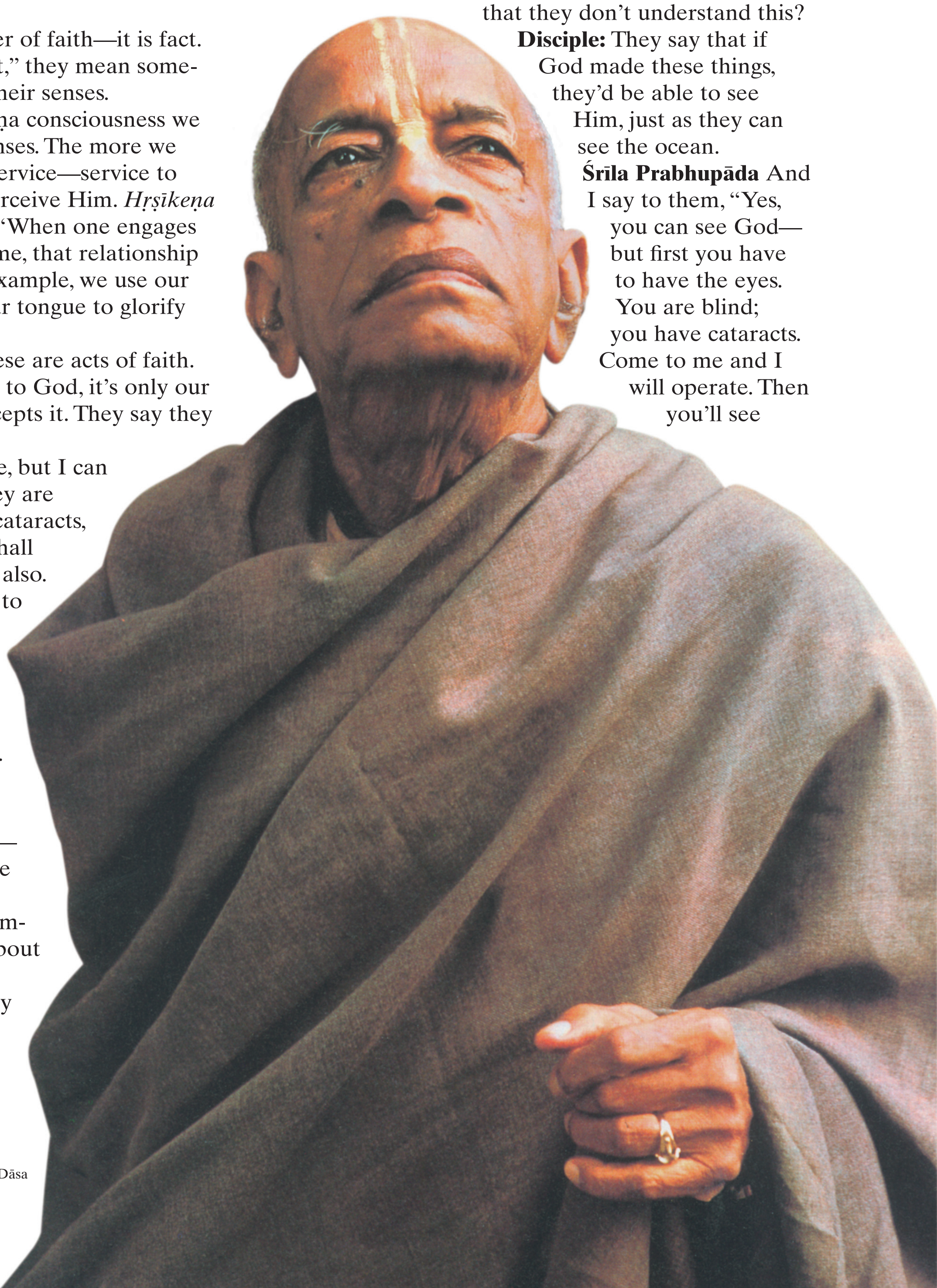


Photo by Bhārgava Dāsa

God." This is why the Vedic scriptures say, *tad-vijñānārthaṁ gurum evābhigacchet:* "To see God you must approach a bona fide spiritual master." Otherwise, how can they see God with their blind eyes?

Disciple: But the scientists don't have any faith in the kind of seeing you're talking about. The only kind of seeing they put any faith in is what they can gather through their eyes and their microscopes and telescopes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Why? If you look up in the sky now, you will think it is vacant. But it is not vacant—your eyes are deficient. There are innumerable planets and stars in the sky, but you cannot see them. You are blind to them. So just because you cannot see the stars and planets, does this mean they do not exist?

Disciple: The scientists admit they're ignorant about some things. But still they won't accept your explanation of things they can't see with their own eyes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Why not?

Disciple: Because they think that what you tell them may be wrong.

Śrīla Prabhupāda That is their misfortune. Our gross senses cannot approach God. To know Him we have to hear from an authority. That is the process for gaining higher knowledge.

Disciple: But that step requires faith. Faith in the guru.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Not faith—common sense! If you want to learn medicine, you have to go to an expert physician. You cannot learn it by yourself.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, from all you've said, it's obvious we can support our ideas as well as the atheistic scientists can support theirs. But they're in control of society. They're dominant.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Dominant? [*Laughs.*] One kick from *māyā* [Kṛṣṇa's material energy] and all their "dominance" is finished in one second. They are controlled by *māyā,* but they are thinking that they are free. This is foolishness.

Disciple: They don't want to come to their senses.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Therefore they are rascals. A rascal is someone who will insist he's right even after you have proved he's wrong. He will never take a good lesson. And why do they remain rascals? *Na māṁ duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ:* because they are *duṣkṛtina*—very, very sinful. Don't you see how they are making a world of slaughterhouses and brothels, how they are ruining everyone's life by promoting sensual enjoyment? These are all sinful activities. And because the scientists are so sinful, they will have to suffer in the darkest regions of hell. In their next life they'll become worms in stool. Yet out of ignorance they are thinking they are safe.

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BETTING ON GOD

(*continued from page 45*)

accoutrements of devotional life are not as hard as they seem, and they get easier as the years pass.

Actually, research shows that these things are good for you. Rising early and being regulated in one's habits are good for health, and so is vegetarianism and refraining from intoxication. Learning how to meditate on Kṛṣṇa's names and contemplating the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness are good for the brain, stimulating in ways that material pleasure can't even approach. Associating with devotees means being with the best people in the world. I've come to love many of my co-practitioners, for they exhibit higher qualities and are some of the best people I've ever met. And chanting the holy name in *kīrtana*—at home, at the temple, or in the streets—has to be the highest pleasure known to man! The spoils of faith definitely outweigh the difficulties of devotion. And if Pascal were here today, he would clearly have reason to increase his odds.

Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor. He has written over 20 books. He lives with his wife and daughter near New York City.

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Gaura Pūrṇimā 2007

The Festival of Loving Exchanges

PRE-FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

January 20–March 2: MI Courses (see below)
January 28–February 1: Global ISKCON Education Conference
January 31: Lord Nityānanda's Appearance
February 5–15: GBC Meetings
February 7: Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Ṭhākura's Vyāsapūjā
Gour Govinda Swami's Disappearance Day

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

February 15: Devotees Arrive
February 16: Festival Inauguration
February 16–19: Prabhupāda Disciples' Reunion, Pañca-tattva Abhiṣeka of the Holy Name, Free Seminars
February 18: Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami's Disappearance Day, Congregational Preaching Night
February 19: Book Distribution Awards
February 20–26: Navadvipa Dhāma Parikramā
February 25: Bhaktitīrtha Swami's Vyāsapūjā
February 26–March 2: Festivities and Cultural Programs
February 27–March 2: Free Seminars
February 27: Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava Boat Festival, World Excellency Awards
February 28: Shantipur Festival
March 1: Gaṅgā Pūjā, Immersion of Departed Souls' Ashes
March 2: Rathayātrā
March 3: Gaura Purnima
March 4: Jagannātha Miśra's Feast
March 5: Devotees Depart

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(Gaura Pūrṇima Courses)

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January 20–February 4: *Vedic Cosmology in the Fifth Canto,* Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa
January 19–21 (women): *Let's Make Friends with the Holy Name, Level 1,* Śrīmatī Devī Dāsī
January 22–24 (men): *Let's Make Friends with the Holy Name, Level 1,* Śrīmatī Devī Dāsī
February 1–4 (women): *Let's Make Friends with the Holy Name, Level 2,* Śrīmatī Devī Dāsī
February 9–12 (men): *Let's Make Friends with the Holy Name, Level 2,* Śrīmatī Devī Dāsī
February 9–14: *VTE Teacher Training Course One,* Atul Kṛṣṇa Dāsa
February 16–19: *Protecting Ourselves from Atheistic Science,* Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā Dāsa
February 16–20: *Temple Worship, Level One,* Jananivāsa Dāsa, Paṅkajāṅghri Dāsa, Nṛsiṁha Kavaca Dāsa; *The Transcendental Art of Deity Dressing,* Jananivāsa Dāsa, Kūrma Caitanya Dāsa
February 16–21: *VTE Teacher Training Course Two,* Rāsamaṇḍala Dāsa, Atul Kṛṣṇa Dāsa
February 17–22: *VTE Leadership and Management Course One,* Anuttama Dāsa
February 22–March 2: *Temple Worship, Level Two,* Jananivāsa Dāsa, Paṅkajāṅghri Dāsa, Nṛsiṁha Kavaca Dāsa
February 25–28: *Communication Skills for Preachers,* Anuttama Dāsa
February 26–March 2: *VTE Bhakti-śāstri Teacher Training Course,* Rāsamaṇḍala Dāsa, Atul Kṛṣṇa Dāsa
February 27–March 2: *Ayurvedic Self-healing One,* Dr. Liladhar Gupta

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LORD KŪRMA

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who reduced the ocean of poison to a palmful and drank it. The poison left a blue mark on Lord Śiva's throat, the mark becoming an emblem of his compassion for all living entities.

The churning of the ocean produced a beautiful white cow, a moon-white steed, a four-tusked elephant, jewels and ornaments, a wish-fulfilling flower of paradise, heavenly damsels, the goddess of fortune, the goddess of intoxication, and many other divine treasures of the sea. Lastly, the Lord of medicine appeared, His hands holding the golden pot of ambrosia.

> ***Not only did the Lord appear as a large tortoise in this pastime, He simultaneously assumed four other forms.***

A Battle Between Good and Evil

The unruly *asuras* forcibly snatched the pot of ambrosia, leaving the *suras* demoralized. While the *asuras* fought viciously among themselves for the nectar, the Lord bewitched their minds in His captivating form as Mohinī-mūrti, a beautiful damsel whose charm surpassed that of the goddess of fortune. The *asuras,* allured by Her beauty, gave Her the jug of nectar, and She delivered all the nectar to the *suras,* leaving none for the *asuras.* One of the *asuras,* comprehending the transcendental trick of the Lord, assumed the form of a *sura* and drank some nectar. When the *suras* detected their enemy, they alerted Mohinī-mūrti, who slashed the *asura's* neck with Her divine disc. The *asura's* head remained immortal, having touched the divine ambrosia.

Not only did the Lord appear as a large tortoise in this pastime, He simultaneously assumed four other forms: one expansion churned the ocean with the *suras,* His thousand-handed form sat atop the mountain to stabilize it, as the Lord of medicine He brought the pot of nectar, and as a charming woman He baffled the *asuras.*

One may ask, "Why did the Lord cheat the *asuras,* who had equally labored in extracting nectar?" There are several reasons:

(1) The *asuras* are vicious like snakes, and they only enjoy giving pain to others. Feeding milk to a snake increases its venom, so bestowing immortal nectar to the *asuras* would eternalize irreligion and misanthropy.

(2) The *asuras* thought they could procure the nectar with their own strength, but the Lord showed them how nothing can happen against His supreme will.

(3) Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.11), "As everyone follows my path, I reward them accordingly." To the devotees, He reciprocates with His divine love, and to the atheistic and sly *asuras,* He reciprocates in His form as the supreme trickster and, if needed, in His gruesome feature as all-destroying death.

(4) For the Lord, protection of His devotees and the destruction of the demoniac forces are far more important than ordinary morality. Lord Kṛṣṇa even engaged the righteous Pāṇḍavas in subterfuge to curb the burden of demoniac kings. The Pāṇḍavas defeated the opposing army by falsifying the death of an enemy general's son; by bringing to the battlefield a eunuch, upon seeing whom an enemy general voluntary stopped fighting; and by smashing with a mace the thighs of an enemy, even though this is against the rules of mace warfare. All this was in harmony with the orders of the Lord, and thus the Pāṇḍavas were saved from any sinful reaction. Similarly, the Lord engaged the *suras* in cheating the *asuras* so that only the *suras* obtained immortality.

(5) Lastly, the pastime of the Lord's alluring the *asuras* in His form of a charming beauty shows the imprudence of falling prey to sexual attraction. The *asuras* were so foolishly captivated by the beauty of the young damsel that they even forgot about the ambrosia.

The Suras Surmount the Asuras

Enraged by the trick of the *suras,* the *asuras* attacked them vehemently. Having drunk ambrosia, the *suras* were easily dispatching the enemy soldiers to their deaths. So the *asuras* resorted to black magic: From a giant mountain in the sky, trees fell, as well as stones, scorpions, snakes, and wild beasts, crushing the *sura* soldiers. Naked demons assaulted them with fierce tridents. Whirlpools and sea waves flooded everything. The *suras,* unable to counteract the illusion, meditated upon the Lord with all their hearts. The *Bhāgavatam* explains, "As the dangers of a dream cease when the dreamer awakens, the illusions created by the jugglery of the demons were vanquished by the transcendental prowess of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as soon as He entered the battlefield." Simply by remembering the Lord, the *suras* became free from all dangers. Thus they conquered the demoniac illusions and obtained victory over the *asuras.*

Aja Govinda Dāsa, a disciple of His Holiness Hanumatpreśaka Swami, is pursuing a master's degree in computer science at Harvard University. Last year, he obtained his B.S. in electrical engineering at the age of seventeen, with a perfect 4.0 GPA. He was a 2005 Top Ten Scholar for Boise State University and an Eta Kappa Nu top graduate in the USA.

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INDIA

Agartala, Tripura — Assam-Agartala Rd., Banamalipur, 799 001/ Tel. (0381) 227053/ Fax: (0381) 224780/ E-mail: premadata@rediffmail.com
Ahmedabad, Gujarat — Satellite Rd., Gandhinagar Highway Crossing, 380 054/ Tel. (079) 686-1945, -1645, or -2350/ E-mail: jasomatinandan.acbsp@pamho.net
Allahabad, UP — Hare Krishna Dham, 161 Kashi Raj Nagar, Baluaghat 211 003/ Tel. (0532) 415294
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Haridwar, Uttaranchal — Prabhupada Ashram, G. House, Nai Basti, Mahadev Nagar, Bhimgoda/ Tel. (01334) 261116
Hyderabad, AP — Hare Krishna Land, Nampally Station Rd., 500 001/ Tel. (040) 2474-4969 or 2460-7089/ E-mail: guesthouse.iskconhyd@pamho.net
Imphal, Manipur — Hare Krishna Land, Airport Rd., 795 001/ Tel. (0385) 2455245 or 2455247 or 2455693/ E-mail: manimandir@sancharnet.in
Indore, MP — 101 Chetak Arch, 7 MG Road/ Tel. (0731) 272665
Jaipur, Rajasthan — ISKCON Road, Opp. Vijay Path, Mansarovar, Jaipur 302 020 (mail: ISKCON, 84/230, Sant Namdev Marg, Opp. K.V. No. 5, Mansarovar, Jaipur 302 020)/ Tel. (0414) 2782765 or 2781860/ E-mail: jaipur@pamho.net
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Ludhiana, Punjab — Sterling Tower, Vrindavan Rd., Civil Lines, 141 001/ Tel. (161) 2770600 or (161) 3118897 or 98159-40005/ E-mail: iskcon.ludhiana@pamho.net
Madurai, TN — 37 Maninagaram Main Road, 625 001/ Tel. (0452) 746472
◆ **Mayapur, WB —** ISKCON, Shree Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir, Shree Mayapur Dham, Dist. Nadia, 741 313/ Tel. (03472) 245239, 245240, or 245233/ Fax: (03472) 245238/ E-mail: mayapur.chandrodaya@pamho.net
Moirang, Manipur — Nongban Enkhol, Tidim Rd./ Tel. 795133
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Mumbai, Maharashtra — 7 K. M. Munshi Marg, Chowpatty 400 007/ Tel. (022) 2366-5500/ Fax: (022) 2367-7941/ E-mail: rgsevaka@pamho.net
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Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat — ISKCON, Opposite Polytechnic, 388 121/ Tel. (02692) 230796 or 233012
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Vijayawada, AP — Venkatapalem Karakatta Rd., Undavalli Village, Tadepalli Mandaal, Vijayawada, Guntur Dist. 522 501/ Tel. (08645) 272513/ E-mail: mmdasiskconvijayawada@gmail.com
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◆ **Vrindavan, UP —** Krishna-Balaram Mandir, Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg, Raman Reti, Mathura Dist., 281 124/ Tel. (0565) 254-0021/ Fax: (0565) 2540-053/ E-mail: vrindavan@pamho.net; (Guesthouse:) Tel. (0565) 254-0022; ramamani@sancharnet.in
Warangal, AP — Mulugu Rd., Ayappa Pidipally, 506 007/ Tel. (08712) 426182

RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Assam — Karnamadhu, Dist. Karimganj
Chamorshi, Maharashtra — 78 Krishnanagar Dham, Dist. Gadhachiroli, 442 603/ Tel. (0218) 623473
Hyderabad, AP (New Naimisaranya Farm) — P. O. Dabilpur Village, Medchal Tq., R.R. Dist., 501 401/ Tel. (040) 4742018
Indore, MP (Krishna-Balarama Mandir) — Hare Krishna Vihar, Nipania Village/ Tel. (731) 572794
Karnataka (Bhaktivedanta Eco-Village) — Nagodi P.O., Vollur Valley, Hosanagar Taluq, Shivmoga District, 577 425 (mail: Garuda Guha, Kollur, D.K. District, 576 220)
Mayapur, WB — (contact ISKCON Mayapur)
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ADDITIONAL RESTAURANT

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CANADA

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Edmonton, Alberta — 9353 35th Ave., T6E 5R5/ Tel. (780) 439-9999/ E-mail: edmonton@iskcon.ca

Note for international phone calls: When dialing from outside the country, drop the “0” that begins most city codes (the numbers shown in parentheses). **Exception:** For Russia, drop the initial “8.” Telephone numbers include country codes, identified by a +. To save space, we’ve skipped the codes for North America (1) and India (91). ◆ Temples with restaurants or dining ● Revised listing

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U.S.A.

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Boston, Massachusetts — 72 Commonwealth Ave., 02116/ Tel. (617) 247-8611/ E-mail: radhagopi@juno.com
Chicago, Illinois — 1716 W. Lunt Ave., 60626/ Tel. (773) 973-0900/ Fax: (773) 973-0526/ E-mail: information@iskconchicago.com
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New York, New York — 26 Second Avenue, 10003/ Tel. (212) 253-6182/ E-mail: webmaster@krishnanyc.com
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — 41 West Allens Lane, 19119/ Tel. (215) 247-4600/ Fax: (215) 247-8702/ E-mail: iskconphilly@aol.com
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — 1408 South St., 19146/ Tel. (215) 985-9335/ E-mail: savecows@aol.com
Phoenix, Arizona — 100 S. Weber Dr., Chandler, 85226/ Tel. (480) 705-4900/ Fax: (480) 705-4901/ E-mail: jayagaurasundar@gmail.com
Portland, Oregon — 3766 SE Division, 97202/ Tel. (503) 236-6734; E-mail: iskconoregon@hotmail.com
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◆ **San Diego, California** — 1030 Grand Ave., Pacific Beach, 92109/ Tel. (858) 483-2500/ Fax: (858) 483-0941
San Jose, California — 951 S. Bascom Ave., 95128/ Tel. (408) 293-4959/ E-mail: iskconsanjose@yahoo.com
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Gurabo, Puerto Rico (New Govardhana Hill) — Carr. 181, Km. 16.3, Bo. Santa Rita, Gurabo (mail: HC-01, Box 8440, Gurabo, PR 00778)/ (Office) Tel. & fax: (787) 737-4265/ (Temple) Tel. (787)712-0358/ E-mail: iskconpr@hotmail.com
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Sandy Ridge, North Carolina (Prabhupada Village) — 1264 Prabhupada Rd., 27046/ Tel. (336) 593-9888

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Seattle, Washington — My Sweet Lord, 5521 University Way, 98105/ Tel. (425) 643-4664
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London, England (south) — 42 Enmore Road, South Norwood, SE25 5NG/ Tel. +44 (020) 8656 4296
Manchester, England — 20 Mayfield Rd., Whalley Range, M16 8FT/ Tel. +44 (0161) 226-4416
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Brisbane — 95 Bank Rd., Graceville (mail: P.O. Box 83, Indooroopilly), QLD 4068/ Tel. +61 (07) 3379-5455/ Fax: +61 (07) 3379-5880/ E-mail: brisbane@pamho.net
Canberra — 1 Quick St., Ainslie, ACT 2602 (mail: P.O. Box 1411, Canberra, ACT 2601)/ Tel. & fax: +61 (02) 6262-6208/ E-mail: adi@actweb.net
Melbourne — 197 Danks St. (mail: P.O. Box 125), Albert Park , VIC 3206/ Tel. +61 (03) 9699-5122/ Fax: +61 (03) 9690-4093/ E-mail: melbourne@pamho.net
Newcastle — 28 Bull St., Mayfield, NSW 2304/ Tel. +61 (02) 4967-7000/ E-mail: iskcon_newcastle@yahoo.com.au
Perth — 144 Railway Parade (corner of The Strand) [mail: P.O. Box 102], Bayswater, WA 6053/ Tel. +61 (08) 9370-1552/ Fax: +61 (08) 9272-6636/ E-mail: iskconperth@optusnet.com.au
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CENTERS AROUND THE WORLD

Sydney — Govinda’s Yoga and Meditation Centre, 112 Darlinghurst Rd., Darlinghurst NSW 2010/ Tel. +61 (02) 9380-5155/ E-mail: info@govindas.com.au

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Bambra, VIC (New Nandagram) — 50 Seaches Outlet, off 1265 Winchelsea Deans Marsh Rd., Bambra VIC 3241/ Tel. +61 (03) 5288-7383/ E-mail: iskcon@bigpond.net.au
Cessnock, NSW (New Gokula) — Lewis Lane (off Mount View Rd., Millfield, near Cessnock [mail: P.O. Box 399, Cessnock, NSW 2325])/ Tel. +61 (02) 4998-1800/ Fax: +61 (02) 9957-1893
Murwillumbah, NSW (New Govardhana) — Tyalgum Rd., Eungella (mail: P.O. Box 687), NSW 2484/ Tel. +61 (02) 6672-6579/ Fax: +61 (02) 6672-5498/ E-mail: ajita@in.com.au

RESTAURANTS

Brisbane — Govinda’s, 99 Elizabeth St., 1st floor, QLD 4000/ Tel. +61 (07) 3210-0255
Brisbane — Krishna’s Cafe, 1st Floor, 82 Venture St., West End, QLD 4000/ E-mail: brisbane@pamho.net
Cairns — Gaura Nitai’s, 55 Spence St., Cairns, QLD/ Tel. +61 (07) 4031-2255 or (0425) 725 901/ Fax: +61 (07) 4031 2256/ E-mail: gauranitais@in.com.au
Christchurch, NZ — 83 Bealey Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 25-190)/ Tel. +64 (03) 366-5174/ Fax: +64 (03) 366-1965/ E-mail: iskconchch@clear.net.nz
Hamilton, NZ — 188 Maui St., RD 8, Te Rapa/ Tel. +64 (07) 850-5108/ E-mail: rmaster@wave.co.nz
Labasa, Fiji — Delailabasa (mail: P.O. Box 133)/ Tel. +679 812912
Lautoka, Fiji — 5 Tavewa Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 125)/ Tel. +679 664112/ Fax: +679 66303
Maroochydore — Govinda’s Vegetarian Cafe, 2/7 First Avenue, QLD 4558/ Tel. +61 (07) 5451-0299
Melbourne — Crossways, 1st Floor, 123 Swanston St., VIC 3000/ Tel. +61 (03) 9650-2939
Melbourne — Gopal’s, 139 Swanston St., VIC 3000/ Tel. +61 (03) 9650-1578
Nausori, Fiji — Hare Krishna Cultural Centre, 2nd Floor, Shop & Save Building, 11 Gulam Nadi St., Nausori Town (mail: P.O. Box 2183, Govt. Bldgs., Suva)/ Tel. +679 9969748 or 3475097/ Fax : +679 3477436/ E-mail: vdas@frca.org.fj
Rakiraki, Fiji — Rewasa (mail: P.O. Box 204)/ Tel. +679 694243
Suva, Fiji — 166 Brewster St. (mail: P.O. Box 4299, Samabula)/ Tel. +679 3318441/ Fax: +679 3319097/ E-mail: iskconsuva@connect.com.fj
Wellington, NZ — 105 Newlands Rd., Newlands/ Tel. +64 (04) 478-4108/ E-mail: iskcon.wellington@paradise.net.nz
Wellington, NZ — Gaura Yoga Centre, 1st Floor, 175 Vivian St. (mail: P.O. Box 6271, Marion Square)/Tel. +64 (04) 801-5500

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Auckland, NZ (New Varshan) — Hwy. 28, Riverhead, next to Huapai Golf Course (mail: R.D. 2, Kumeu)/ Tel. +64 (09) 412-8075/ Fax: +64 (09) 412-7130

EUROPE (partial list)*

Amsterdam — Van Hilligaertstraat 17, 1072 JX/ Tel. +31 (020) 675-1404 or -1694/ Fax: +31 (020) 675-1405/ E-mail: amsterdam@pamho.net
Barcelona — Plaza Reial 12, Entlo 2, 08002/ Tel. +34 93 302-5194/ E-mail: templobcn@hotmail.com
Bergamo, Italy — Villaggio Hare Krishna (da Medolago strada per Terno d’Isola), 24040 Chignolo d’Isola (BG)/ Tel. +39 (035) 4940706
Budapest — Lehel Street 15–17, 1039 Budapest/ Tel. +36 (01) 391-0435/ Fax: (01) 242-3233/ E-mail: budapest@pamho.net
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*The full list appears in the January/February and July/August issues, and is always available at Krishna.com, where the list also includes Krishna conscious gatherings.

The Will to Love

IT'S PROBABLY A TRUISM that relationships are difficult. These days it's common for couples to seek counseling because they've come to a point where they no longer feel the love they once had for each other. A premise in marriage counseling is that the couple can do things to reawaken the lost feelings. If there's a will to reconcile, there's hope.

We can apply this premise to our relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness teaches that the purpose of life is to love God, specifically in His original form as Lord Kṛṣṇa. But people might object that they just don't feel any love for Kṛṣṇa. They might ask whether it is even possible to make oneself love someone if the feelings don't come naturally. Using the analogy of marriage counseling, we'd say that things can be done, especially when there's something to build on.

We first have to understand that loving Kṛṣṇa is natural for us but our original nature is now covered. In fact, we can't not love Kṛṣṇa. Love for Kṛṣṇa is an energy that flows from us, like fragrance from perfume. Unfortunately, our love energy is now misdirected. We've focused our love, meant for Kṛṣṇa, on the temporary things of this world.

One consequence of misdirecting our love for Kṛṣṇa is that we're never fully satisfied in relationships. No one and nothing can return our love like Kṛṣṇa can. He knows us intimately, and He'll never leave us. He's the only perfect object of our love.

Because loving Kṛṣṇa is natural, we can do things to bring out our feelings for Him. That's what *bhakti-yoga* is all about. The great *bhakti-yogi* Prahlāda Mahāraja lists nine things we can do to draw out our love for Kṛṣṇa. The list begins with hearing about Kṛṣṇa from those who already love Him, speaking about Him and reciting His names, and remembering Him. These and the other six practices have immense spiritual power.

The theory of *bhakti-yoga* makes great sense: Since Kṛṣṇa is God, He must be infinitely attractive. By associating with Him through the practices of *bhakti-yoga,* we set ourselves up to fall in love with Him.

Of course, falling in love with Kṛṣṇa is different from falling in love in this world. I spoke of marital love earlier, but in fact any love in this world is but a dim reflection of true spiritual love. Nothing in this world comes close to the selfless love that flows between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. We need to learn about that love and allow ourselves to be inspired to want to attain it. Whatever we hope to gain from love in this world is available millions of times over by loving Kṛṣṇa.

We can do something about our lack of affection for Kṛṣṇa. We can begin by nurturing our desire to love Him. We have to understand that love of Kṛṣṇa is what we're really looking for in all our attempts at satisfaction in this world. Even if the feelings aren't there in the beginning, once we muster the will to love Kṛṣṇa, we can take advantage of the tools of *bhakti-yoga* and watch the feelings grow. —*Nāgarāja Dāsa*

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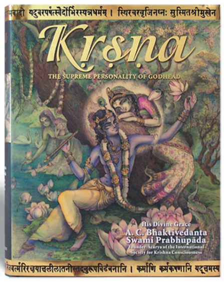
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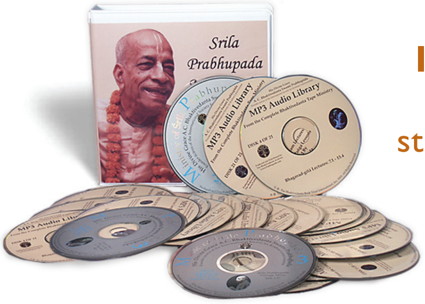

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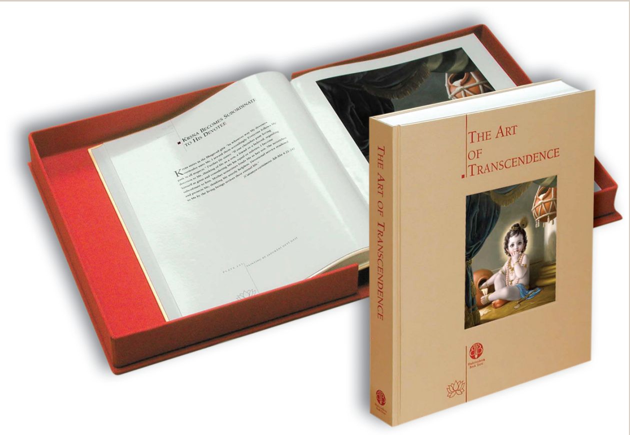

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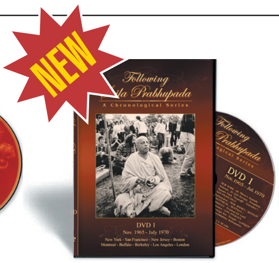
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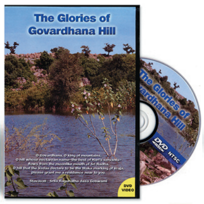
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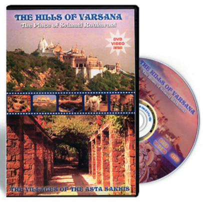
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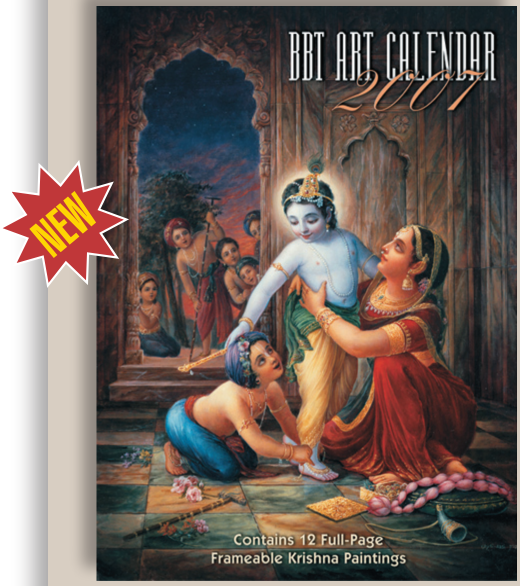
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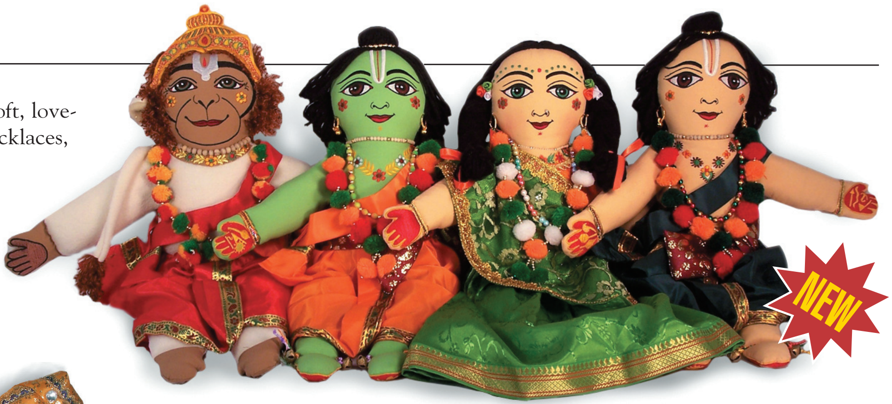

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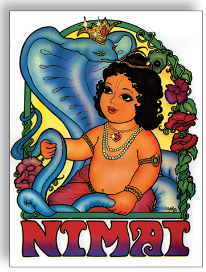

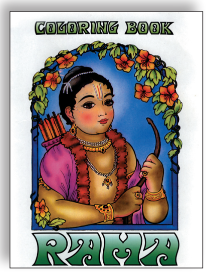

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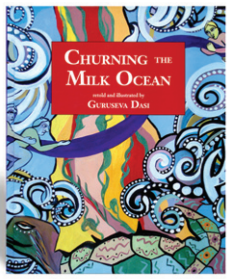

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VEDIC THOUGHTS

The *bhakti* cult is the topmost of all transcendental activities, and therefore it is simultaneously sublime and easy. It is sublime for the pure devotees who are serious about getting in contact with the Supreme Lord, and it is easy for the neophytes who are just on the threshold of the house of *bhakti*.

—His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.7, Purport

Just fix your mind upon Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt.

—Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, *Bhagavad-gītā* 12.8

Either pure or impure, or having passed through all conditions of material life, if one can remember the lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa, he becomes externally and internally clean.

—*Garuḍa Purāṇa*

Just as fire applied to gold removes any discoloration caused by traces of other metals, Lord Viṣṇu within the heart purifies the minds of the yogis.

—Bhūmī Devī, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.47

Forgetting Kṛṣṇa, the living entity has been attracted by the external feature from time immemorial. Therefore the illusory energy [*māyā*] gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence. In the material condition, the living entity is sometimes raised to higher planetary systems and material prosperity and sometimes drowned in a hellish situation. His state is exactly like that of a criminal whom a king punishes by submerging him in water and then raising him again from the water.

—Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 20.117–118

Of the innumerable eternal conscious beings, there is one eternal Supreme Being. He maintains the innumerable living beings according to individual work and reaction of work. By His expansion as Paramātmā that Supreme Lord is also present within the heart of every living being. Only through saintly persons, who can see that Supreme Lord within and without, can one attain perfect and eternal peace. —*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.13

O handsome Lord Govinda, we happily bow down to offer our respects to You. Please be kind and give us a drop of the pure love that completely eclipses the moon of non-devotional philosophy.

—Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, *Stava-mālā* 5.27

At different places in the Vedic literature the Absolute Truth is said to be indescribable. This means that His qualities are unlimited and He cannot be adequately described. It is my opinion that any other interpretation of this is illogical and senseless.

—Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa
Prameya Ratnāvalī 2.3

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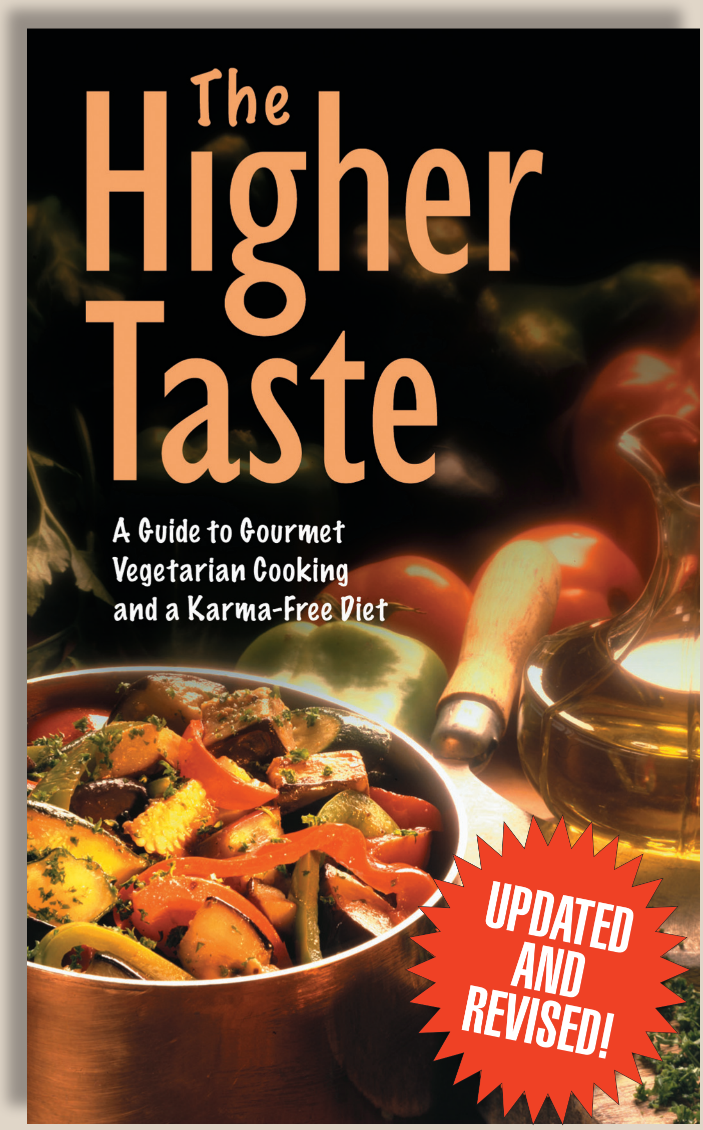
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